THE COMPARATIVE TONE

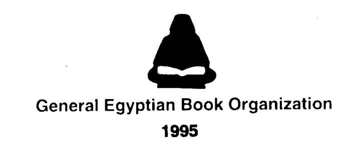
Essays in
Comparative Literature
with Special Reference to
English Studies in Egypt, Translation
and Culture

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with Appendices on
Arabic Comparative Studies
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PREFACE

When in the late1920s Taha Hussein established *Une Section des Langues Vivantes* at the *Faculté des lettres* of Fouad I University (today's Cairo University) he was only too conscious of the implications of that 'revolutionary' step: he was crowning the efforts started by Muhamed Ali nearly a century previously, and developed explicitly by Khediv Ismail Pasha, in the heady days of the 1860s, to forge vital links between Egypt and Europe. The 'living languages' which Hussein had in mind were European - and they included, ironically, old Greek and Latin, which lived only in the contemporary languages of Western Europe. An Azharite by upbringing and early academic training, the notable blind man had a vision of Egypt as a modern State belonging at once to its ancient past (re-discovered in the 19th century) and to the Arabic-Islamic traditions which had by then undergone considerable transformations, but with its eyes firmly fixed on the present – the living 'scientific' culture of 20th century Europe. The duality of culture was in effect a reflection of a *national* effort aimed at crystallizing a new concept of belonging which differed vastly from Kamal Ataturk's stark and blatant Europeanization; for Taha Hussein always spoke 'classical' Arabic,

consistently revisited Arab past and retold its story in such forceful books as his *Marginalia on the Prophet's Life* and *With Abul-Alaa in his Confinement*. His translations of ancient Greek drama were unprecedented: for the first time in our history the Arabs heard Oedipus arguing with his gods in modern Arabic, though tinged with classical hues. The accents were old, but the texts were older; and his translations of other Greek prose works opened up new avenues for the second generation of scholars: it was an indirect call to the Arabs, awakening in Egypt but soundly asleep in most other Arab countries, to read European literature and thought in Arabic. Hussein was not an occidentalist, in the sense that William Jones or Richard Burton were orientalists; he was an Arab who believed in cultural marriages and saw in the interaction of Arab and European cultures a means of revitalizing our tradition. His influential*The Future of Culture in Egypt* spelt out what he believed was the sure way of modernizing an ailing culture; and his application of 'modern' European methodologies to the study of literature contributed to the birth of new genres in Arabic – the novel, the short story and drama. The students who specialized in English and French at *la section*, became acutely conscious of the clash of cultures and literatures: comparisons were made, willy-nilly, and comparative literature was born.

A great deal has taken place since the first graduates of the French and English Departments made an impact on the cultural-literary life in Egypt: some were exclusively, or almost exclusively, European scholars (like Hussein's own son, Mounes, and Raymond Francis, both living in France and teaching French to the French at present) but the majority of English graduates went back to Arabic, distinguishing themselves as scholars in Arabic literature and in comparative literature, such as the brilliant M.M. Badawi of St. Anthony's College, Oxford, and the late M. Manzalawi, both Alexandrian graduates. In Cairo, S. El-Qalamawi, an Arabic scholar, paved the way for the study

of comparative literature while Lewis Awad and Rashad Rushdi, both deceased, established a living tradition of writing critical and creative works in English and Arabic. A notable member of the next generation, Magdi Wahba, proved to be a lexicographer of the first magnitude; and a host of graduates followed in the steps of those giants.

Unfortunately for the cultural life in Egypt, a few teachers of English and French seem to lose sight of the fact that we all are Egyptians, that our language is Arabic (be it modern standard or Egyptian) and that however steeped in 'foreign' culture, we remain Egyptian Arabs with a way of life that could never be equated, strictly speaking, with the European way of life, ancient or modern. Some have therefore advocated a total divorce from our tradition, believing that learning the language in itself should secure the goal for us; and the assiduous efforts of foreign 'cultural centres' in Egypt have helped to confirm that trend. The fact is, however, for all our interest in and use (even perfection) of a foreign language we shall consistently refer to our tradition. The novelists may adopt European forms, but the flesh and blood of the novels will remain Egyptian. The same will equally apply to other literary genres, and the essays in this book are a modest attempt to throw light on the concept of comparative literature in Egypt.

In the opening essay I argue that all Egyptian students of European literature are in fact students of comparative literature, that regardless of the language in which it is taught, the foreign text *must* refer to our native heritage -- to our present life. Some of the essays have been published elsewhere, some have been presented as 'papers' at seminars; but together they represent a coherent vision of our efforts in translation and cultural exchange and may provoke others to disagree, widening the scope of research in this area.

M. Enani
Cairo, 1994.

Tone, Interpretation and the Comparative Situation

An Essay
on The Dynamics
of Reading English Texts
in Arabic Speaking Nations

Tone, Interpretation and The Comparative Situation

1.0. Presuppositions:

An act of communication is essentially an act of interpretation: successful communication, verbal or non-verbal, relies on the ability to decode a transmitted message correctly. In its simplest form an act of comprehension, interpretation presupposes a knowledge of an old code or a willingness to learn a new one. Where the code is common to both sender and receiver (speaker and listener) difficulties of comprehension will be minimal: problems will only arise at the level of what Dr. Berne calls the 'games' level (*Games People Play,* Penguin, 1964). At that level, the message will not inhere in the actual (literal or metaphorical) meaning of the words; it will depend on the ability of the utterance to involve the hearer in a certain game, social or psychological, which the speaker may be consciously or unconsciously playing.

1.1. Rules of the Game:

The 'games' theory, first introduced in 1964, is now a classic of modern psychology (as are in fact most of Berne's classifications of communication levels -- that is, ritual, mechanical, pastime, games and mature). In experiment after experiment, it has been found that the allusive power of speech also depends on factors requiring the willingness of the receiver (the Listener) to respond to, and thereafter take part in, the game: where such responsiveness is lacking, correct interpretation becomes difficult, not to say impossible.[1]

2. 0. Game or no Game?

In ordinary situations, however, where a common code is used and no game is intended, only 'normal' misunderstandings are likely to occur. I use the word 'normal' only to distinguish ordinary from 'game' situations even though the two kinds often overlap in practice. For the sake of argument, however, let us assume that a normal situation is that in which a common language is used for any other

(1) To illustrate this, it may be sufficient to refer to a situation that is becoming increasingly common in today's Egypt - the use of doxological utterances in the course of an otherwise ordinary conversation. The use of a verse from holy scripture, in our case the Quran, may be unintentional and the speaker may be doing it in good faith as a natural consequence of his upbringing; but at the 'games' level, it may be intended to allude to a fact without which the game cannot start. It may be meant to send the following message; 'I am a devout Muslim, and you must infinitely trust me'. Now if the listener accepts the allusion, regardless of whether he actually believes the message itself or not, we shall have a game situation. Obviously, communication in this case will depend on the correct interpretation of the message which may have very little to do with the meaning of the words uttered. In more complex situations, the speaker may encode his message differently, using certain signs which he knows to be significant to his listener, thereby forcing him to participate in the game; and his triumph will depend on his ability to place the allusions at key points in the conversation to ensure that they are correctly interpreted.

purpose than that of playing games. Interpretation is undoubtedly easier here, though the existence of a common language is often more of an ideal than a factual premise. While some students of pragmatics and psychology will contest the games theory, most students of sociolinguistics will agree that the parameters judging the dynamics of such a 'common' language are more variable than constant; and, where a society has two overlapping levels of linguistic performance as we have in Egypt (there are five, according to Professor Said Badawi's *Levels of Contemporary Arabic in Egypt*, Cairo, 1973) with the added and inevitable level of a foreign language (English in our case) associated as it is with learning and specialization in certain disciplines, the assumption that a common language exists will be all the more untenable.

2. 1. The Literary Game.

We may, however, assume that each literary work involves a game insofar as it presents *a special* situation in which an action takes place according to specific rules known to both players, though adjusted from time to time by consensus (and which may be described as a special formula). The literary formula cannot be confined therefore to the formal qualities of the message but will be found to include ideological and emotional aspects as well (pertaining to both sender and receiver). As David Lodge has shown in his post-structuralist studies, the reader will hold the key to the process of interpretation inasmuch as he is capable of recognizing that formula (Cf. *The Modes of Modern Writing*, London, 1977, Edward Arnold). He may accept or reject the message, but if he agrees to decode the

message according to the established formula, that is to say, the established rules of play, he will have consented to play that game. So, when the reader sees the printed poem on the page, he or she will have to make a quick decision. If he or she decides it would be worth his or her while to do so, he or she will accept the premise that the language may represent a deviation from ordinary discourse, that it may be artificial at times (lexically, structurally or semantically) and that the content may be different from that used elsewhere. He or she may also exercise what Coleridge calls the 'willing suspension of disbelief' and accept the contradictions, the illogical utterances or even the unabashed 'lies' of the poet. An established formula will always guarantee a *basic standard interpretation* of each work within each genre. In a novel the writer must assume that most readers will accept it as fiction: he or she must proceed from the assumption that, though certain features of his or her work will be controversial, most features will be enjoyed without questioning, as most of his or her readers will enjoy 'suspense', the bizarre characters introduced, and the fulfilment of their unexpressed desire to see naughty Mr. X punished and good Mrs. Y rewarded. The same applies to other literary genres.

2. 2. The Formula

The 'formula' concept is essential to any fresh approach to *interpretation* because it is based on a number of reasonable presuppositions about the potential response of the reader. These have been studied at length and experiments have shown that in certain circumstances generalizations are possible through novel response measurement techniques. I.A. Richards' *Practical Criticism* is now a work of the past, and even Professor Harding's remarks about

potential responses, regarded as revolutionary in the 1960s, have now been superseded by the fresh Umberto Eco-based observations of Terence Hawkes (Cf. *Structuralism and Semantics*, London, 1977) and Keir Elam (Cf. *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama,* London, 1980). In his introduction to *On Signs* (Oxford, 1985) Marshall Blonsky explains how the change in the rules of the literary game was brought about by a number of Europeans in the 1950s (notably Barthes' *Degré Zero de l'écriture*, 1955, and *Mythologies,* 1957, and Eco's and his colleagues' journal *Communications*). The rules of the game, which determine the formula, were then expanded to include signs other than the usual linguistic ones. 'The first semiology', he concludes, 'was a vast project of ideological criterion aimed at spying out the wheelworks of idea and content production' (p. xvii). The second semiology, we know, was born in the early 1970s and was, 'Americanized', gaudy... eager to become the lay saint, Method; eager to transmit a knowledge capital, deliver the secret of a technique, and thereby become the guru of a Movement of Ideas' (*ibid.*). Those were the 'heady days of seeing the functioning of the world's semantic organizations; of catching not the meaning, but the production of meaning, the *signification*'.

2. 3. Unstable Formula

The situation today is one of 'anxiety' in the handling of literary signs. The 'formula' proves every day to be capable of bringing about misunderstandings by failing to account for the 'tone' - sometimes referred to as the 'murmured meanings' within the obvious unobvious statements made by an utterance – "the murmured meanings from 'between the words', words under words" (Blonsky,

ibid.) My contention is that 'tone' is a factor which determines the potential layers of meaning – primary, secondary or incidental – or what Todorav calls the 'hierarchy of meanings' (*Symbolism and Interpretation*, 1982). Without it, meanings may be 'undone', as Blonsky has warned (*op, cit.*) and the whole game may collapse. Tone is essential to a successful formula inasmuch as it preserves the individuality of the work, that is, it safeguards the specificity of each individual structure as a semantic construct. Put differently, it shows that each work may have a formula and a sub-formula, a text and a sub-text. Unfortunately for Arabic-spraking students of English, few independent studies have been made of the use of tone in Arabic literature. Only recently did scholars, prompted by Salah Abdul-Sabour's assertion that such a feature did and does exist in Arabic poetry (*A New Reading of our Ancient Poetry*), attempt to see if other tones could be found apart from the serious, elevated, 'polite' or formal ones. While the verses written in Egyptian Arabic are alive with tones as varied as those found in any modern European language, and make use of irony in the wider sense, they are not regarded as part of the Arabic tradition and are not studied in any depth.

2. 4. Tone in the Formula

The 'formula' of the literary game, I have argued, is not confined to the formal qualities of the literary text, and that owing to the tendency to neglect the study of tone in Arabic literature our students are rarely conscious of its existence. We often complain that many of them cannot play the literary game properly, that is, that they fail to respond properly to literary works because of their inability to

recognize such formulae. I have also argued that tone is essential to each formula, and that without it a good deal will be missed in the process of interpretation. But what is tone? According to John Crowe Ransom, who first introduced the examination of tone as the third pillar of textual analysis, the other two being 'structure' and 'texture', tone is the author's attitude to his material, that is, his tendency to be 'serious', 'sarcastic', 'direct', 'oblique', 'ironic' or 'frivolous', etc. No formal categorization has been made of actual or potential tones in a work of art, though the variety of tones available to poets and novelists is much more limited than those available to dramatists who can use their characters as personae (personas) or as idependent characters (complete, rich and interesting in themselves in Dickensian fashion). However, the interpretation of tonal strains in drama is largely determined by the dramatic situation in the play, and any other interpretation to which an actor has access (orthodox or otherwise) cannot deviate too much from the core of the play's dramatic meaning. In 1965 Peter Hall, then artistic director of the Royal Shakespeare Company, insisted in his controversial production of *Hamlet* that Ophelia should be regarded as a neurotic girl, caught up in the intricate web of a palace intrigue and that we should feel that her death was suicidal. Janet Susman's exquisite performance did not clash with the lines of the part and the critics hailed it as a success. However, the experiment was doomed as the audience rejected the realistic 'tone' of Hall's interpretation, especially David Warner's Hamlet, because it appeared to destroy the established meaning of the play. The critical success was a popular failure, as is often the case with novel Shakespearean interpretations.

2. 5. Tone in Poetry

In poetry the identification of 'tone' is sometimes difficult because we are usually not guided by the poet to the 'right' or intended tone. In the poems which T. S. Eliot describes as poems of the 'second voice' ('The Three Voices of Poetry' in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism*) where the poet assumes a *persona* and speaks with the voice of another character, one may be guided by the kind of character portrayed and the situation created for him, by Prufrock in Eliot's poem and by Bishop Blougram in Browning's. But it is difficult in poems of the 'first Voice' (where the poet speaks to us directly without the intervention of a character) to judge what tone he may have in mind. Generalizations about schools or movements can be misleading: the distinction made by Cleanth Brooks between neo-classical and romantic poetry in terms of 'wit' and 'high seriousness' respectively (*Modern Poetry and the Tradition*) fails to explain much of the poetry written by Shelley and Byron, as well as notable exceptions in the verse of Dryden and Pope. Shelley's parody of Wordsworth's *Peter Bell* is a remarkable specimen of romantic satire which is totally different in tone from Byron's parody of Robert Southey's *Vision of Judgment.* The difficulty is aggravated by our having to take the audience into consideration, that is, having to examine the literary game where the poem constitutes only one element in the process – the written part in the formula which is specially encoded to be decoded by a certain receiver. Because written, the poem (as document) seems capable of easy interpretation as though 'fixed' and permanent. However, it cannot be properly interpreted except through grasping the right tone with reference to the

reader. And such interpretation, as Brooks says in *The Well Wrought Urn* must involve a measure of cultural archaeology.

2. 5. 1. The Egyptian Scene: A Footnote

Most Egyptian students are deprived of the chance to enjoy the tone of a given text, even when assisted by the teacher, because, as I have indicated, the tradition of classical Arabic to which our literary canon belongs *seems* to lack any variation in tonal structure. One reason is that the bulk of Arabic literature consisted until the early 20th century, of lyrical verse (poetry in the first voice). Arabic prose before 1914 was limited to the ornate orations of people who had lived outside Egypt more than a thousand years ago, and the highly decorative epistles of learned men (from *The Epistles of the Brethren of Purity* to the *Epistles* of Abul-Alaa Al-Maari or Al-Qadi Al-Fadil or Badi 'uzaman Al-Hamazani). The lack of a dramatic tradition has generated a tendency, now a deep-seated habit of mind, to read an Arabic work of art as allowing only a single tone, and a single interpretation. Another reason is, of course, that we are not encouraged by the literary establishment to regard anything written in Egyptian Arabic as worthy of critical respect. No wonder few people pay attention to or are even aware of the existence of tone.

2. 6. Modernist Irony

In my *Varieties of Irony* (1986) I argued that an approach through 'tone' will reveal a quintessential quality of modern poetry, namely the use of irony at different levels. I would like now to argue that any poem that continues to be read can be approached in terms of tone, with possible fresh insights into its meaning. Take a short lyric written

by Byron which is usually regarded as a satirical onslaught on love:

So, we'll go no more aroving,
So late into the night,
Though the heart be still as loving
And the moon be still as bright.

The sword will outwear its sheath
And the soul wears out the breast
And the heart must pause to breathe
And love itself have rest.*

What is the tone of the poet here? He seems, no doubt, to call for a 'breather', to use modern political jargon, that is, a respite from the 'toil' of love. The intention seems to be sarcastic as the poet seems to be making fun of habits of behaviour associated with love – having long walks in the night, preferably when it is full moon. The reason given appears logical enough: love, which is the job traditionally assigned to the 'heart', may erode it: passion may cause the body to

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* Done into verse:

إذن لن نهيم على وجهنا
بعيدا وحتى الهزيع الأخير
وفى القلب لما يزل حبنا
وما زال فى الكون بدر منير
تعيش السيوف وتَفنى الغمد
وتُفنى النفوس كيان الجسد
ولابد للقلب أن يتوقف كى يستريح
وللحب أن يستريح معه!

(فن الترجمة. ct).

perish. But is that what the poem actually means? The obvious analogy between the sheath and the body, the sword and the soul, implies a deeper analogy between love and the spirit which is couched in a fleshly sheath. Love is equated, in other words, with life, and to call for it to have rest is tantamount to a call for death.

Now no reader can accept this call as serious; it has to be ironic insofar as it calls, at the level of prose statement, for the opposite. To say 'let us stop loving one another so that we can die' is in effect to say 'we cannot stop, otherwise we'll die'. And to say something while in fact you mean the opposite is one standard definition of irony, though the apparent meaning must always be taken into account. Indeed, one must first establish the apparent meaning before proceeding to read the 'other' meaning; the former may thus be regarded as 'primary', with the latter as 'secondary'.

2. 7. The Hierarchy of Meanings

The problem of having 'primary' and 'secondary' meanings is a recent one (Cf. Richard Harland, *Superstructuralism.* London, Methuen, 1987). When raised by Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism* many years ago, it was more or less confined to the realm of 'rhetoric'. 'Irony' was not regarded as a tonal feature but a 'rhetorical scheme' of the kind associated with the early Shakespeare (see the Introduction to my translation of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Cairo, 1992). Even before Todorav introduced his theory of a 'hierarchy of meanings' in 1978 (*op.cit.*) scholars had started to question the rhetorical approach. The difference is this: the rhetorical approach presupposes a universal formula inasmuch as it presupposes a

standard literary game where the reader's response is uniform: every reader will be expected to respond to individual rhetorical schemes such as epanolepsis, stichomythia or paronomasia, regardless of the individuality of the context (the poem) and the inevitable individuality of tone. The modern approach, however, preserves this individuality by involving the reader in the literary game, and, of course, by insisting that tone can change the meaning of such rhetorical schemes. Without making inroads into 'deconstructivism', I hope to emphasize the role of tone as related to the role of the reader: I am aligned with the mainstream concepts of modern criticism in regarding the text as a set of signs that should attract our greatest attention (Cf. C. Butler, *Interpretation, Deconstruction and Ideology*, Oxford, 1984). What I lament is the utter lack of consideration of tone as the factor which should determine a given reader's response. A 'primary' meaning of what is commonly regarded as an 'elegy' may become 'secondary' if the reader is biographically or philosophically oriented, or if his or her cultural matrix allows him or her to celebrate death as the true beginning of life (I have had such an experience in parts of India when the death of a man was celebrated with song and dance). But such terms as 'primary', 'secondary' and 'individual', convenient though they are, can be misleading: they may suggest a scale of significance or an order of importance especially for those readers who are not trained to grasp tone. An example will explain what I mean by this.

2. 7. 1. A Romantic Modernist?

Wordsworth's 'Sublime Epitaph' has been at the centre of a controversy that simply rages on:

A slumber did my spirit seal
  I had no human fears
She seemed a thing that could not feel
  The touch of earthly years

No motion has she now no force
  She neither hears nor sees
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
  With rocks and stones and trees*

It is, traditionally, one of the 'Lucy' poems, a series of fine poems written in Goslar, a dreary provincial town, in late 18th century Germany, where Wordsworth had spent the winter alone with his sister, suffering one of the 'coldest winters' of that century. The dismal surroundings were blamed for the elegiac mood and, after Emile Legouis' discovery of the 'natural' daughter the poet had by his French mistress Annette Vallon, critics tended to regard the elegies as an indirect lament over the poet's separation from little Caroline. Supported by references in the accompanying poems to Lucy as a

* Done into verse:

خَتَمَ النُّعاسُ على رُوحى وغَيَّبها
ومحا مخاوف البشرْ
فبدت لعينى فتاة ليس تلمسها
يد السنين والقدرْ
فالآن قد سكنتْ والقوة اندثرتْ
ومضى زمان السمع والبصرِ
وغدت تدور ببطن الأرض دَورتَها
كالصخر والأحجار والشجرِ

(فن الترجمة. ct).

child, this interpretation came to be firmly established in the inter-war period and the poem was included in almost every anthology of lyrical poetry as the perfect 'philosophical' elegy. However, the literary world was not to enjoy this assurance for long, for in 1954 W.F. Bateson suggested that the poet was in fact lamenting the imagined (or secretly desired) death of his sister, thus betraying an unconscious wish to see her dead because, Bateson argued, he had harboured an illicit passion for his sister. The book was banned from all university libraries in England, doing untold damage to the scholar's reputation. The interpretation which occurred in a book entitled *Wordsworth: a re-interpretation,* was not in itself so shocking: it simply clashed with the Victorian image of the poet, firmly established by Arnold, as the venerable sage whose love of nature left no room for such profanities. The image of 'Daddy Wordsworth' was tarnished, and Bateson had to be punished. Another edition of the book eventually appeared where the reference to the secret passion was suppressed and the biographical interpretation was replaced by a philosophical one. Even though the storm passed, say by the mid-1960s, the critics could not forget the fury (and behind it a touch of furore) of the establishment. The biographical interpretation must be banished for ever, and the text must be regarded as the sole testimony of the poet's intention and tone. Brooks did his best to do that in the 1950s, followed by many critics who regarded this text as a 'test case' for one school after another until Abrams's interesting 'deconstructivist' reading. But how can tone help us establish the right 'hierarchy of meanings' in this text? My answer will naturally depend on the recognition of those meanings first. Obviously, the primary meaning must concern awakening to the reality of death, that is, the fact that the girl's death wakes the poet from the 'sleep of life' to stare mortality in the face.

Bound up with this meaning is the paradox of the second stanza, where the girl who now 'has no motion' does move with the earth, involuntarily but perpetually. 'She' has acquired a kind of immortality with another set of creatures and as another 'mode of being'. She is now part of the earth, like 'rocks and stones and trees'.

2. 8. The Reader considered:

Who do you Think You're Talking to?

Now the secondary meaning must depend on the reader's response, that is, his ability to accept the poet's invitation to share his wonder at the transformation. If the reader is inclined to do so, he may recognize questions like 'Isn't it strange that this should be so?' and 'Don't you share my astonishment at the transformation?' If, on the other hand, the reader is strictly committed to the traditional high-seriousness of the elegy, he may be tempted to accept Bateson's philosophical interpretation that insofar as the universe is alive, death must mean very little: it may simply be regarded as a gateway to another mode of life. For the sake of argument, I shall assume that the modern reader will grasp the 'sense of wonder' which pervades the lines and the poet's quiet use of 'wit'. This should make the poem a statement of the poet's bewilderment, his uncertainty regarding the traditional concepts of life and death and, as such, a witty comment on the passing away of a human spirit.

2. 8. 1. Tone and the Reader

The recognition of either tone will make the reader a positive partner in the 'creation' of the poem – an essential player of the formula. And if, as I have suggested, our modern reader will prefer the

secondary 'witty' interpretation, he may end up regarding it as more important than the primary. I personally find it more prominent; for here we have an image of life-in-death, though different, of course, from the eerie figure in the skeleton ship of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* and from T. S. Eliot's Zombie-like labourers in *The Waste Land.* The supposed seriousness of tone is undermined by a nagging question about the reality of the movement: 'something' is 'rolled round'; but is it the 'girl'? One can, of course, go along with the poet in assuming that it is 'she', if only to maintain the illusion, that is, in the full knowledge that it is an illusion, which naturally calls the poet's seriousness in question.

2. 8. 2. Irony and Paradox.

The post-modernists allow us to regard any paradoxical structure as ironic (C.f. M. Sarup, *Post-Structuralism and Post-modernism,* USA, 1989), and the ironic 'tone' as reflecting the spirit of our age more truthfully than the strident tones of romantic enthusiasts. The subdued tones of Philip Larkin have been hailed as the only tones fit for our age because they almost perfectly fit the contrapuntal thinking of our times. But, as we have seen, even the romantics can be interpreted contrapuntally. The ambiguities of the metaphysical poets have been found to be everywhere in the poetry of antiquity, rather than being a typical feature of the modernists as Eliot had maintained. My contention is that in the process of recognizing the tone the reader must accept the ambiguities and the paradoxes as integral components of the poetic intuition. No poet worth his salt can be free of them, whether the poem is a straightforward lyric or part of a dramatic situation.

The conflict of tones will always pose problems for the reader; but then it is a game which we must either accept with all its attendant problems or not play at all.

2. 9. The Living Challenge

Let us now turn to those well-known lines from *Romeo and Juliet* which are traditionally regarded as 'both serious and comic' (G. Blackmore Evans, New Cambridge edition, p. 12):

Here's much to do with hate, but more with love:
Why then O brawling love, O loving hate,
O any thing of nothing first create!
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,
Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health,
Still-waking sleep, that is not what it is!
This love feel I, that feel no love in this.
Dost thou not laugh?

I.i. 166-174.

The situation is easy enough to understand: for here we see Romeo for the first time on the stage in a conversation with his confidant Benvolio on the qualities of love. Shakespeare opens the play with a Romeo who is already 'love-bewildered', as Coleridge points out (*Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare*, ed. T. Ashe, 1885, p. 323, quoted in Evans's edition of the play p.11) He introduces to us a Romeo "who is undergoing all the delicious pangs and enjoyed agonies of a young man fashionably 'in love' or, as Coleridge puts it, 'in love only with his own idea' (*ibid.*, p. 98). Romeo here is 'playing'

a conventional role, and this first substantial speech, Evans tells us, 'puts the authentic verbal seal on this role' (*op. cit.* p. 12) The 'verbal seal' consists of the 'conventional language of earlier courtly love as it had developed in the sonnet tradition from Petrarch and other continental practitioners to Wyatt, Surrey, Watson, Sidney and Spenser ... a language compounded of hyperbole, more or less witty conceits, word-play, oxymorons and endless repetition' (*ibid.*) Mercutio later confirms this conventional role by pointing out that Romeo is 'for the numbers that Petrarch flowed in' (II. iv. 34-5) so that we are certain that Romeo's role is that of a lover in love with love (hence, as Evans maintains, largely with himself). But isn't Romeo serious, in spite of the facile medium of sonnetese? Benvolio's cue is 'Dost thou not laugh?' which makes us wonder whether Shakespeare wants an occasion for a potential joke. What possible tone can an actor opt for if he is to capture the real spirit of the speech? To state, as Evans does, that it is both serious and comic is to raise the question of interpretation in terms of tone, but leave it unanswered. For if we believe that Romeo is in love with Rosaline, whatever our definition of a teenager's love may be, the change that occurs in him when he sees Juliet must be puzzling indeed. If on the other hand, we accept Coleridge's view (and the general trend in critical opinion) that he is only posturing, however vigorously expressed, we shall be able to accept the transformation as brought about by Juliet's positive response and intensified by the hostility of the two families and its consequences. The fact is that, however, we cannot assume that Romeo's comments on the ambiguous and 'frighteningly fragile nature of love' constitute simple posturing, even

if we had doubts about the real nature of his attraction to Rosaline. The theme is 'serious', even if the 'tone' proves to be only half-serious or even comic. Such a problem text presents innumerable difficulties to the interpreter, especially if he is foolish enough to try and do it into a different language. Let me refer, therefore, to my own experience in trying to do this speech, as part of the play, into Arabic. The first version, produced in 1965, was in prose: it was no more than a translation of the primary meaning which totally destroyed the rich tonal structure of the lines. The second, done in 1985, captured the lyricism, the melodious tones of the original, though sacrificing a good deal of the prose sense. The last, published in 1994, tries to combine the stark prose-sense with the tones of the original, and even tries to transmit the oscillation between the serious 'message' and the frivolous attitude of the 'teenager'. Whether I have succeeded or not in this ambitious task will depend on the ability of the reader to recognize the devices I have used to reflect Shakespeare's tones; if he or she cannot, I will have to try again, I suppose.

Here are the three versions:

In prose (1965)

ها هى نتيجة الكراهية التى نعانى منها، ولكن معاناتنا من الحب أكبر!
يا عجبا للحبيب العدو، والعدو المحب! أيها الحب! لقد خُلق منك
كل شىء، رغم أنك خلقت من لا شىء! أيها السرور الحزين!
أيها المرح الجاد! فوضى شائهة من صور جميلة مختلطة!
ريشة من الرصاص، ودخان مضىء، ونار باردة
وصحة مريضة، ونوم دائم السهر، أى أنه ينفى
وجوده! هذا هو الحب الذى أحسه ولا أحس فيه
بحب! لماذا لا تضحك؟

In verse (1986)

فذاك حصاد العداء المقيم
ثمار كراهية الأولين
نعانى من الكره بعض الألم
وأجنى من الحب كل الندم
فيا عجباً للحبيب العدو
ويا عجباً للعدو الحبيب
ويا حب ما أنت قل لى
نقائض للعقل لا تستجيب
سرور حزين وحزن مرح
ودمع ضحوك وفرح ترح
عماءٌ من الصور الرائعة
جمال من البدع الشائهة
رصاص من الريش مثل الهواء
دخان يضيء كنار السماء
وثلج من النار حار رطيب
وجسم صحيح عليل معاً
ونوم يناجى نجوم الفضاء
وصحوة قلب تناجى الهباء
فهذا هو الحب يروى الدماء
ولا نرتوى منه إلا الدماء
لماذا إذن لست تضحك؟

And finally, in verse again in 1993:

فتلك كراهية الأولين وأفدح منها غرامى الأليم
فيا عجبا يا غرام الصراع وكرها به نبضات الغرام
ويا خفة ذات وطء ثقيل ويا زهوة ذات وجه عبوس!
وأخلاطك الرثة الشائهات من الصور الحلوة الرائعات
رصاص من الريش نار من الزمهرير دخان منير
وسقم من الصحة الكاملة!

ونوم هو الصحوة الدائمة!
وحال يناقض ما هو فيه!
فهذا هو الحب فيما أحس ولست أحس لديه بحب
لماذا إذن لست تضحك؟

* * *

3. 0. The Comparative Situation

To dwell on individual differences between one text and the next is simply to stress the need to reconsider the question of literary translation as an act of interpretation in the matrix of the culture of the target language: old questions pertaining to the degree of freedom allowed in such interpretation, the legitimacy of regarding the translated text as a fresh literary product, and the role of the target language culture in determining the 'literary' qualities of such a fresh product have been addressed elsewhere (Cf. Particularly W. Barntsone, W., *The Poetics of Translation*, New Haven, 1993, pp. 11-14), but the new question which has not even been raised is to what extent the translation of a given text may involve a 'comparative situation'. The question is, in other words, to what extent are we allowed to regard the translation of a foreign text as an act of *imitation* of the foreign text alone (to use Dryden's term) and, perhaps at the same time, an implied *comparison* with an old, established text (or texts) in the target language? The relevant questions here are:

-- *What sort of reader does the translated text attempt to appeal to?* How far does his or her familiarity with the literary tradition of the target language influence the translator's choice of linguistic medium – 'level' of language, idiom, imagery, and other 'constants' of literary texts?

- How far can the translator *disentagle himself from the tradition of the target language* in trying to capture the 'meaning' of the foreign text? Can he assume the position of a maker of a new literary idiom within the old, established idiom? If immersed in the tradition of the target language, can he hope to overcome such restrictions as are inevitably imposed on him and present a text that is relatively free from target language traditions?

3. 1. The Reader-Translator Nexus

The two questions obviously overlap: for at the centre of each we have a consciousness of another text fighting for survival underneath the translated text. To the extent that this other text is only implied, the 'comparative' situation will be minimal; but in certain cases, the reader or the writer (or both) are required to refer strongly to the other text for an understanding of the new one (even if not translated, as happens in cases of inter-textuality) .

3. 1. 1. The Comparative Situation as Formula

In its simplest manifestations, the 'comparative situation' appears as a formula in the target language: a reader of Arabic poetry will expect a poem to be written in verse – using one of the 16 metres familiar in the tradition, more recently confined to about 6, with the modulations strictly permitted by the ancients. The form of the poem on the printed page will help the reader to identify the genre, especially if the rhyme words used are strongly marked. Here the 'constants' of the formula will be essential to the determination of the

poem's meaning: the six metres most commonly used have been described as 'pure' (Arabic: Safiyah) that is, relying on the repetition of a single unit (foot), much in the tradition of European verse, as opposed to 'mixed' (Arabic: Murakkabah) that is, using two or more units (feet) in alternation. The perception of this rhythmic scheme will ensure that the reader is asked to refer to certain texts in his own language which may have the same 'constants', so that the 'variables' can be recognized as constituting the *additions*, the contribution of the new text to the corpus of the target language. If a 'mixed' metre is used, the 'comparative situation' will be more marked, as the reference will be to more specific texts in the Arabic tradition. An example should serve to illustrate both cases: translating Shakespeare's ditty 'Take O take those lips away', Al-Mazini opted for a classical formula, using a 'mixed' metre with an implied reference to a similar 'formula' (in the same metre) from pre-Islamic verse:

Take O take those lips away
That so sweetly were foresworn


ابعدوا عنّيَ الشفاه اللواتي   كن يطفئن من أوار الصادي

with the implied reference to the line of Al-Khansaa:

قربوا مربط المشهر مني   لكليب فقد أشاب قذالي

The metre is called *'Al-Khafeef'* (the light) and though the rhyme letter (*Al-Rawiyy*) is different, the final long vowel (ee) is common to

both and the similarities are enough to establish a comparison. Needless to say, the fact that the opening word in the translated text constitutes an antithesis – direct, obvious and emphatic – to the traditional word, helps to establish the 'comparative situation'. If, on the other hand, the metre is 'pure', the reader will refer to the modern poetic output in Arabic which is almost always rhythmically 'pure'. A recent translation of another Shakespearean ditty ['Tell me where is fancy bred/ Or in the heart or in the head?'] is modelled on a popular song in Egyptian Arabic:

ما أصل وهم الحب
فى العين أم فى القلب

Which recalls:

القلب والا العين
مين السبب فى الحب؟

Indeed, the similarities are too overpowering to ignore (rhythm, rhyme and structure) and the variations again establish the contribution of the new text. Sometimes, it is true, the references are subtle, and can only be read in occasional structures, phrases or even single words.

3. 1. 2. A Colour Test

Let us then focus on the famous line in Juliet's soliloquy (III. ii) 'Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night!' (20) which has been variously rendered into Arabic with reference to the 'colour' of the night (masculine in Arabic, though Juliet earlier in the speech refers to it as a 'matron', 11) recalling different associations in *Arabic*

rather than in *English.* Shakespeare invariably uses the adjective to indicate a 'dark' complexion: in *The Merchant of Venice* the Prince of Morocco serves as a prototype for another 'black' general who manages to marry a white Venetian – Othello! Morocco here asks Portia not to 'mislike' him for his 'complexion' the colour of which he describes as 'The shadow'd livery of the burnish'd sun' (II.i. 1-3) which has been rendered into Arabic as:

لا تنفرى منى لسمرة الأديم إنها
رداء ظـل أرتـــديـه
فى حضرة الشمس التى تشع ناراً

The Arabic word *Sumrah*, from the adjective (*Asmar*), commonly means 'dark' (or 'brown', though modern Arabic has a different idiomatic word for 'brown' which literally means coffee-coloured – *Bounny*). The associations of *Asmar* in Arabic originate in the ancient use of the verb *Yasmar* to refer to staying up in the moonlight, for long conversations and anecdotes, and the use of the noun in referring to the moonlight itself. The use of the colour *Asmar* seems to have developed in this way, having been transferred to the 'shadow of the moon' that is to 'moonlight shadows' though the colour has varied in the long literary tradition of Arabic from black to auburn, often associated with the colour of the earth (Cf. *adeem* أديم, which literally means earth or clay, hence Adam, that is, he who is the colour of earth, the earth-made, or the earthly). The combination in the Arabic text of *Sumrah* and *Adeem* cannot be an exact equivalent of the simple 'complexion'; and the other uses in Shakespeare of the word to refer to 'colour', pure and simple, confirm this. In *Othello* Iago refers to the possibility that Desdemona could have preferred suitors 'of her own clime, *complexion*, and degree' (II. iii. 230) and Othello soon echoes

the idea suggested to him by his lieutenant:

Haply, for I am black
And have not those parts of conversation
That chamberers have, or for I am declined
Into the vale of years,--

III. iii.. 263-266

Othello spells out what Iago has merely hinted at, and 'black' comes to the fore, explicitly and flagrantly! It should be noted that both Morocco and Othello are Christian, and Portia's insistence that the Prince should first go to the 'temple' (by consensus a reference to the Belmont Church, II. i. 44) to take an oath removes the possibility of a clash of religions, as does Lord Olivier's wearing of a huge cross in his astounding interpretation of the Moor. The elimination of such other factors as could have 'confused the issue' for Shakespeare helps to concentrate on colour – or race-consciousness in both cases. The question of whether 'black' in Shakespeare should be taken to refer to what we usually mean by it today (jet black) or be regarded as a generic term for all non-white races (coloured) has not been adequately answered. When in A *Midsummer Night's Dream* Theseus says that a lover's imagination is so powerful, that he 'all as frantic/ Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt' (V. i. 11) the immediate meaning will again involve colour, and no Arab reader (and perhaps no modern European reader either) will believe that it requires such imaginative power to see the beauty of Helen, strictly defined, in a gipsy's face, unless the contrast is understood to be made between white and black! Shakespeare's frequent references elsewhere to 'white' as the colour of purity confirms this reading, and as Othello

regards Desdemona's supposed unfaithfulness as the ultimate irony, because the 'black' deed she is accused of committing can only indicate a 'black' soul difficult to associate with a skin 'whiter... than snow' (V.i.4) Romeo refers to the 'white wonder of dear Juliet's hand' (III. iii. 36), echoing the image used by Juliet immediately before the above-quoted lines:

Come, night; come Romeo, come, thou day in night
For thou will lie upon the wings of night
Whiter than new snow on a raven's back.
Come, gentle night, come, loving, black-brow'd night
(III. ii. 17-20)

Why is it, therefore, that the most recent verse reading of the play gives us the following translation of the last line:

اقبل إذن يا اسمر الجبهة يا   ليلُ و يا ولهان يا غضٌ الإهاب!

Passing over the reversal of the order of epithets in the line as belonging to a different inquiry into the mechanics of translation, we must pause to consider two adjectival compounds which strongly recall a specific text, namely two lines in a famous poem by Ali Mahmoud Taha, put to music and sung by Abdul Wahab, the most distinguished singer-composer of the Arab world in modern times:

هل رايتن على النهـــر فـــتى غض الإهاب
أسمـر الجبـهـة كـالخمـرة فى النور المذاب؟

ديوان على محمود طه - ص ٥١٥.

Have you seen on the river a lad so gentle,
Dark-browed like wine in the melted light?

The 'verbal echoes' are again too powerful to be explained in terms of the translator's desire to present an idiomatic text: the Arabic song is known virtually to every Arab, regardless of background, and therefore constitutes a 'reference text' establishing the 'comparative situation'. From a deconstructivist viewpoint, the 'constants' in the new text secure an adequate basis for referring the reader *not* to external reality but to a well-established literary text, with the attendant clash of associations: the appeal by Juliet to 'night' comes to be superimposed on the Arabic poet's appeal to the banks of the Nile as the translator seeks to convey the former through the latter:

يا ضفاف النيل بالله ويا خضر الروابى
هل رايتن على النهر فتى غض الإهاب
اسمر الجبهة كالخمرة فى النور المذاب
سابحاً فى زورق من صنع أحلام الشباب
إن يكن مر وحيا من بعيد أو قريب
فصفيه وأعيدى وصفه فهو حبيبى

O banks of the Nile! O Green turfs all round!
Have you seen on the river a lad so gentle
Dark-browed like wine in the melted light
Flitting in a boat made of the dreams of youth?
If he did pass and greet you, far away or near-by,
Describe him to me, over and over again, for he is
my sweetheart!

It is hardly a coincidence that the love scene in the Arabic poem is modelled on the well-known barge-scene in *Antony And Cleopatra:* the title of the Arabic poem is Cleopatra and, with the knowledge that in Arabic the poet invariably refers to the beloved as 'he' (the

masculine *Habeeb* حبيب is used more frequently than the feminine *Habeebah* حبيبة in lyrical verse to refer to the sweetheart) the 'lad' mentioned above is none other than Cleopatra herself! It is this kind of 'comparative situation' that explains why the translator found it natural to change the colour word of the original, opting for the literary rather than the linguistic equivalent; and the Taha poem provided him too with an unexpected interpretation of 'gentle' : for the Arabic غض الإهاب literally means 'tender of frame', though the dictionaries will give us an infinite number of meanings for the adjective (the most important of which is 'soft') and the common collocation' غض بض' suggests a measure of freshness and vitality in describing the flesh. Indeed it is only with the Arabic text in mind that the rendering of 'gentle' in this way can be explained.

3. 2. The Reference Text

It should be pointed out that the choice of the 'reference' text is usually suggested by the translator's interpretation of the 'tone' of the original English. Sometimes a certain text is inevitable, as the translator finds himself faced with a 'verbal construct' that forces certain associations on his consciousness, driving him almost relentlessly in the direction of one particular 'tone' which determines the 'reference' text. The 'tone' is sometimes indicated by a single word or structure or rhythm usually occurring at key points in the text. More often than not the translator submits to the power of a single image, if dominant, so that his interpretation of the tone of the work is controlled by it. So, rather than simply using a 'trick of the trade', in avoiding the adjective 'black', the translator has in fact adopted the image created for the night earlier, not as a black-faced person but as a

person wearing black. He actually used the Arabic word twice earlier in the speech with reference to 'night's cloak' (used by Romeo in II. ii. 75) and the 'mask of night' (used by Juliet in II. ii. 85). Here is the relevant part of the speech:

Come civil night,
Thou sober-suited matron, all in black,
And learn me how to lose a winning match
Played for a pair of stainless maidenhoods.
Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle;

10- 15

and the Arabic rendering:

أقبل إذن يا أيها الليل الرزين
يا ذا العباءة التى تلف بالسواد حكمة السنين
قل كيف أخسر المباراة التى ربحتها
ما بين عذاراء وبكر طاهرين
واحجب دماً فى وجنتى يدف كالصقر السجين
بوشاحك الأسود...

The 'black mantle' of line 15 is therefore a continuation of the earlier metaphor (a variation on 'black' and 'mask') which further confirms the colour as belonging to attire not to 'complexion': in Shakespeare, the night is a matron, wearing the garb of wisdom (sober-suited) which is black! Thus far the translator has established the cultural equivalent by turning the matron into a patrician, or an old sage, whose help is invoked by the little wife on her wedding night. Any sudden change of metaphor could not be done without destroying the 'tone': hence the 'comparative situation' where the new image of the 'lover', or 'beloved' (both meaning covered by *loving*) is made to

reflect Juliet's passion for Romeo, as well as the image of the 'gentle' Romeo who could be 'dark' but not 'black'.

3. 3. Footnote for Translators

As a footnote for translators, I would strongly emphasize the need to note the dominant images (Cf. Rugoff's *Donne's Imagery*) which control the tone and determine the interpretation of a given text. In avoiding the stark 'black-browed' in Arabic the translator did not balk from describing the night as 'black', either for cultural or literary associations. True, the blackness of the face, for which the brow is used synecdochically, has unpleasant associations in Arabic*, but there are texts in Arabic where the night is described as black and where it is given the most atrocious appellations. Consider a well-known line by Abul-Alaa' Al Ma'arri:

ليلتى هذه عروس من الزنج عليها قلائد من جمان

This, my night is a Negress in her bridal pomp
Wearing necklaces of silver (stars)

---

* In the Quran we read:

يوم تبيض وجوه وتسود وجوه، فأما الذين اسودت وجوههم أكفرتم بعد إيمانكم... وأما الذين ابيضت وجوههم ففى رحمة الله هم فيها خالدون - آل عمران ١٠٦ - ١٠٧.

(some) faces will be whitened and (some) faces will be blackened. Those whose faces have been blackened (will be asked): Disbelieved ye after your profession of faith?... And as for those whose faces have been whitened, in the mercy of Allah they dwell for ever.

and a famous line of Arabic verse says:

وللبخيل على أمواله علل　　　زرق العيون عليها أوجه سود

A miser is attached to his money by desires
Which have blue eyes and black faces.

which recalls – but, in fact, anticipates Shakespeare's lines by more than six centuries:

It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiope's ear;
I. v. 46-47

We may not, of course, assume any influence; indeed, it is the lack of 'comparative situation' here that produced a rendered text bearing the hallmark of the translator's method – namely interpretation:

لقد تدلت فوق خد الليل مثل جوهرة
ثمينة فى أذن بنت حبشية!

And this footnote must end with a reference to an Arabic original text, a verse drama by Salah Abdul-Saboor, where the famous 'What's in a name?' is parodied to produce shattering results:

ماذا يعنى الإسم؟
فالوردة تحت أى اسم تنشر عطرا
والقنفد تحت أي اسم يدخل فى جلده

مسافر ليل

What's in a name? A rose
By any other name would smell as sweet
And the hedgehog by any other name would roll
itself up!
Night Traveller

which recalls Shakespeare's:

What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,...
II. ii. 43-45

ليس للاسماء معنى! فالذى ندعوه ورداً
ينشر العطر وإن غيرت اسمه
مثل روميو دون أن ندعوه روميو...

4. 0. The Comparative Situation - The Cultural Dimension

I have so far argued that insofar as every literary work is a *formula* controlled by the cultural matrix of its *language*, broadly defined, its tone must be established within that matrix. And, because, pragmatically, every new work inevitably refers to the body of literature which uses the same formula, any change of language inevitably changes the interpretation of the formula. No degree of 'honesty' or 'accuracy' in the rendering of a given text will avert the change in interpretation because the translation must refer the reader to his own culture -- and literature.

Let me advance the theory that *whenever a reader is faced with a literary work originally produced in a language other than his native language,* whether the actual presentation is made in the original language or as a translated version of the original, a *comparative situation will inevitably exist.* As a translated text the new work will, I have already argued, refer the reader to the literature of his language and its cultural matrix; the point need not be laboured any further. If presented, however, in its original language the text will refer the reader to his knowledge of literature, that is, to his literary education (or culture) -- a whole body of ideas, concepts and *formulae* that may have come to him from his own or any other language in order to accommodate the new work. The 'clash of associations' to which I earlier referred as influencing the 'tone' and consequently the reader's

response to the work, will be minimal when the reader's culture is closely related to the culture of the foreign text; but the comparative situation will exist all the same. An Eighteenth-century French reader of *Hamlet* may regard it as a neo-classical tragedy, as Ronny Heylen has convincingly shown in her recent book, just as Twentieth-century readers will read modern French literature and theatrical modes in Shakespeare's English lines; though the lines be in Russian and French! (*Translation, Poetics and the Stage: Six French Hamlets,* London, Routledge, 1993). Implicit comparisons within closely related cultures are less problematic and are continually made without effort.

Sharing important cultural roots, a Frenchman will easily enjoy the work of an English poet, even write about it in French without the need to translate the lines he quotes into French. So did Emile Legouis when he wrote his remarkable *La Jeunesse de William Wordsworth*, (later translated by Matthews as *The Early life of William Wordsworth)* and so do many European scholars today. The comparisons are, I have said, less problematic, but problems do exist. Common cultural factors such as religion, history, level of industrialization and geographic proximity did not make the interchange of European literary works an easy task for the translator or the scholar: other factors pertaining primarily to ideology and socio-economic conditions have affected the smoothness of comparisons. (Cf. Palma Zlateva, tr.& ed. *Translation as Social Action: Russian and Bulgarian Perspectives,* London: Routledge, 1993). However, insuperable problems face the translator and student of foreign literature alike when the target language is archaic and the 'comparative situation' invokes texts that are several centuries old.

The archaic language of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poets is still being regarded as a paragon of excellence to be aspired to by every poet worth his salt. Strangely, for all the efforts of the modernists over the last fifty years or so, beginning, say, with Lewis Awad in the 1940s and ending up with a host of youngsters who find it much easier to use 'pure' metres (see 3.1.1. above) and do away with rhyme, the tradition of ancient Arabic poetry still reigns supreme and most poets and critics (and, more importantly, readers) are still under its sway. Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has departed from that language in many respects (Cf. *The Language of Arabic Fiction*, below) but the old variety of Arabic survives in verse. Apart from the lexical and structural difficulties involved, that language refers the reader to a world that is decidedly defunct: a culture of desert life that was once alive with camels, swords, horses, lions, slaves (especially slave girls), tents, and a whole set of values pertaining to nomadic life. That language is in effect *dead*: nobody speaks it, nobody uses it in writing, and very few can decipher its coded messages (Cf. Badawi, *Levels of Contemporary Arabic in Egypt,* Cairo 1973); but most readers will refer to it as the poetic language par excellence, and, among the moderns a famous and most influential writer has written a book just to prove it (Al-Aqqaad, *The Poetic Language,* Cairo, 1961). The difficulties which a teacher of English literature encounters in today's Arab world are indeed real: he must either accept the impossibility of the 'comparative situation' by refraining from any reference to Arabic poetry and culture, that is, by teaching English as texts pertaining to a totally different world, where the only interest will be in the language, or defy such impossibility (or get round it) by attempting to refer the reader to his own literature and culture. For those who opt for the

former, an implicit assumption will be that English literature is all *unreal* and all *irrelevant* – an assumption that destroys a basic tenet in the study of literature, by depriving it of meaning, not merely of ideology or social relevance. To read a play or a poem as an acceptable formula is essential for grasping the 'right' tone and reaching the 'right' interpretation; it is the 'willing suspension of disbelief' that will ensure the acceptance of the formula, as Coleridge has taught. To read and believe that a lover may 'bestride the gossamer/ That idles in the wanton summer air' is to grasp the real 'tone' of Friar Lawrence's sympathy with Romeo, and his fascination with the beauty of Juliet (which incurred the wrath of many a critic – can a holy man admire physical beauty? (Cf. Evans' edition, *op. cit.)* However, to accept it only as fiction, with the stress on the coda 'so light is vanity!' is to miss the real emotion of the Friar that could have been blamed for the tragic end of the lovers. Explaining Eliot's 'principle' that it was the 'dissociation of sensibility' that caused the deterioration of the poetic output after the metaphysical poets, Basil Willey says that the separation of the rational from the emotional functions may be blamed primarily on the *lack of belief* in the latter seventeenth century when the scientific bent of the mind drove away most of the 'beliefs' that had animated the imagery of the great Elizabethan age. Opting for this method the teacher will therefore assure his students that nothing they read in English need be taken seriously and when Shakespeare makes King Lear exclaim that like 'flies to wanton boys are we to the Gods! They kill us for their sport', the student must banish any suggestion that this could be a real emotion; it is an out-and-out lie and no amount of explication could justify the description of the 'Gods' as wanton boys, even if we

assume that the reference is actually to the angels (as in Milton's *Paradise Lost*). If, on the other hand, the teacher defies what I have called the impossibility of the 'comparative situation', then he will have to create a measure of comparativeness in the teaching of English literature by encouraging the students, and the wider reading public, to accept foreign modes of human relations, expressions and cultural norms as part of a universal system, a cosmic system embracing all forms of human situations and actions, admitting an infinite amount of variation, by allowing the coexistence of belief and disbelief within the work of art, as is the case in external reality - in the real world.

* * *

5.0. The Comparative Situation: The Case For Translation.

A cogent argument may thus be made for the translation of basic texts from English into Arabic, regardless of the level of language used (Cf. Badawi, *op. cit.)* to serve as the Arabic versions of the most commonly used texts in schools and universities. They can never, of course, be substituted for the original texts; nor could they be regarded even as exact equivalents or analogues. They will, nevertheless, function as cultural mediators to help the students break the language barrier, and see what may remain of the text when its linguistic foreignness has been conquered. This is why Khaleel Mutran's translations of Shakespeare must be hailed as more worthy of acclaim than the literal translations of the Arab League Shakespearean Translations: for Mutran forced the Arab reader to accept Shakespeare as a great writer. Though done from the French into Arabic prose, and in spite of their frequent departures from Shakespeare in meaning,

tone and linguistic texture (to use a neglected critical term) they have established a tradition in themselves, to the extent of becoming part of the canon of Arabic dramatic art. They have determined the direction taken by a whole generation of playwrights, writing in verse or prose; and, perhaps no less important, the manner of putting Shakespeare on the stage for half a century, and of doing the historical plays on television, especially 'Islamic' plays, owes much to Mutran. With Islam at the centre of almost every Arab cultural revival in this century, the Quran has been omnipresent as the ultimate Arabic text, with its attendant exegesis (always in classical, near-archaic Arabic) apart from a multitude of hermeneutical publications proliferating at a breathless speed. The passion for the past (Cf. the chapter on *The Past as Future,* below) has been increasingly fed by such texts as Mutran's.

5.1. The Comparative Situation: The Case Against Translation.

The balance between source-text oriented research, which constitutes the mainstream of European translation studies, and target- language inquiries (such as I have attempted in this essay) has rarely been maintained (Cf. E: Gentzler, *Contemporary Translation Theories*, London, Routledge, 1993). With the comparative situation in focus, the balance cannot be tilted either way without sacrificing important elements on this side or that. As a practising translator, I find myself generally on the side of the target-language party, though nagging questions continue to be raised: if every translation represents a comparison with a given text or texts in the target language, who will decide the kind of text to be chosen as model? 'Market forces', to use a common term in economics, will direct the translator to popular texts or to texts that could ensure his own popularity. Carried to an

extreme, this could involve a measure of pandering to contemporary tastes - reprehensible by any standard. Mutran aspired, in doing *Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello* and *The Merchant of Venice,* to classical ideals; so did Mohamed Hamdi in his *Julius Caesar*, and Lewis Awad in his *Antony and Cleopatra*. The uniformly 'high' style adopted in doing comedies, tragedies and 'Roman' plays bespeaks a desire to relate Shakespeare to ancient Arabic poetry though none of these is in verse. A whole generation of actors, playwrights and producers have consequently tended to regard Shakespeare as a dramatist whose tone is uniformly 'high' -- as basically grim and grave. When a group of writers-critics went to the *Al-Tali'ah* theatre in Cairo, in 1981, to watch my adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* they were shocked and outraged. The Egyptian Arabic used was too low, they concluded, to answer to their concept of the 'grand' Shakespeare; the frivolity of acting, the singing and dancing, did not accord with the 'sober-suited' sage of yore! A young critic, brought up on the tradition of Mutran, contributed an article to a weekly magazine entitled "The Murder of a Playwright" (Mohamed Al-Rifa'i, writing in *Sabah Al-Khair).* When, on the other hand, 'academic' translations are produced which seek to represent Shakespeare as faithfully as possible, such as Fatma Moussa's erudite rendering of *King Lear* and Abdul-Qadir Al-Qitt's translation of *Hamlet* and *Richard II,* and Farouq Abdul-Wahab Mustafa*'s Measure for Measure*, the result is accurate texts which are, on the whole, neutral: they are good interpretations, and they establish the 'correct' tone by shunning the vagaries of ancient Arabic idiom and the vulgarisms of colloquial speech: but they all use contemporary (Modern Standard) Arabic, which is again uniform. They refer the reader to no poets, ancient or

modern, and they make no claim of contributing to a living body of poetic tradition. Other instances will be found in the work of Badr Tawfiq who started as a poet following in the footsteps of Salah Abdul-Saboor then decided to be a translator, doing Shakespeare's *Sonnets* into Arabic prose and Fitzgerald's *Ruba'iyat*: his glaring inability to understand the English text notwithstanding, his Arabic version gives us a lack-lustre view of both works and his prose is especially meagre, almost emaciated. One need go no further than Ahmed Rami's translation of Al-Khayyam or Al-Mazini's, or Al-Sibai's, to see the difference between the inspired translations of real poets and that of a poetaster miserably prosing (without the advantage of accuracy or the ability to grasp the 'tone').

* * *

6. 0. The Comparative Echo

Professor Abdul-Hamid Younes, who had specialized in Arabic folklore and established important traditions for doing research in this area, ended up by calling for a comparative approach which anticipated the deconstructivists by many years: as early as the mid 1950s, he advocated a method whereby a given work of art, especially if it had a collective authorship or could be regarded as the result of a collective effort (after Foucault) of the imagination, may be compared with works that were produced by similar forces, in a different, or even in the same language, insofar as both may be regarded as realization of the work of those forces. The touchstone for him was the reader, and the variety of interpretations that could be, naturally, restricted by the nature of those forces. The seeds of that view were contained in a book for which he won a State Award in 1961, but were developed in

articles and lectures which continue to be, unfortunately, unpublished. When I mentioned to him that a vague memory of *Julius Caesar* continually drove me towards a nightmarish vision of the political situation in Egypt at the time (Cf. Introduction to *The Prisoner and the Jailor*, Cairo, 1989) he remarked that the same forces at work in ancient Rome might be still alive in today's world, quoting the following lines by Cassius and Brutus (III. i. 111-118),

Cassius: How many ages hence
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over
In states unborn, and accents yet unknown?
Brutus: How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,
That now on Pompey's basis lies along,
No worthier than the dust?
Cassius: So oft as that shall be,
So often shall the knot of us be called
The men that gave their country liberty.

So, finally, I would like to suggest that it was the echo of the famous speech by Cassius (I. ii. 110 et seq.) that was reflected in the parody in an Arabic play by the present writer, a year or so before the translation was done. It is a curious fact that the English words had almost worked subliminally for 30 odd years to produce that analogue! That should, I suppose, make a good conclusion to my lengthy argument. Here is the original Shakespeare first:

For once, upon a raw and gusty day,
The troubled Tiber chafing with her shores,
Caesar said to me, "Dar'st thou, Cassius, now

Leap in with me into this angry flood
And swim to yonder point? Upon the word,
Accoutred as I was, I plunged in
And bade him follow; so indeed he did.
The torrent roared, and we did buffet it
With lusty sinews, throwing it aside
And stemming it with hearts of controversy.
But ere we could arrive the point proposed,
Caesar cried, 'Help me, Cassiaus, or I sink!'
Ay, as Aeneas, our great ancestor,
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber
Did I the tired Caesar. And this man
Is now become a god, and Cassius is
A wretched creature and must bend his body
If Caesar carelessly but nod on him.
He had a fever when he was in Spain,
And when the fit was on him I did mark
How he did shake. 'Tis true, this god did shake,
His coward lips did from their colour fly,
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world
Did lose his lustre. I did hear him groan,
Ay, and that tongue of his that bade the Romans
Mark him and write his speeches in their books,
'Alas', it cried, 'give me some drink, Titinius',
As a sick girl. Ye gods, it doth amaze me

A man of such a feeble temper should
So get the start of the majestic world
And bear the palm alone.

Shout. Flourish

Brutus: Another general shout!

and here is the translation:

وأذكُر مرةً فى يوم زَمْهَرِيرٍ عاصفِ الريحِ
عَلَتْ فيه أمواجُ نهر التيبر ولاَطَمَتْ ضَفَّتَيْه
أن قال لى قيصرُ «هل تجرؤُ يا كاشياس
أن ترمىَ بِنَفْسِكَ الآنَ معى فى هذا النَّهْر الغَاضِبِ
وتسبحَ إلى الشَّطِّ الآخر؟»
ولم يكد ينتهى من عبارته حتى ألقيتُ بنفسى فى الماء
بكامِلِ عُدَّتى وسلاحى، وطلبتُ منه أن يَتْبَعَنى،
ففعل.
وانْطَلَقْنا نُجَالِدُ اليَمَّ الزَّاخِرَ المُزَمجِرَ
بعضلاتٍ من حديد! نَشُقُّ عُبَابه، وَنكْبَحُ جِمَاحَه،
بقلوبٍ عَقَدَتِ العزمَ على النِّضال.
ولكنْ قبلَ أنْ نَصِلَ إلى المَوْضِعِ المَنْشُودِ
صاح قيصرُ «أَدْرِكْنى يا كاشياس وإلاَّ غَرِقْت!»
ومثلما فَعَلَ سَلَفُنا العظيمُ (إينياس)
الذى حَمَلَ على كتفيه أباه (انكيزس)
لِيُنقذَه من ألسنةِ اللَّهَبِ فى طُروادة

حَمَلْتُ على كَتفى قيصر الذى أنْهَكَهُ التعب
وأنقذتُه من غائلة الأمواج!
ذلك الإنسانُ الذى أصبحَ الآن إلهاً
تَعْنُو له جَبْهَةُ كاشياس المسكين التعس
إذا ما أَوْمَأَ قيصرُ إليه دونَ اكتراث!
وعندما كنا فى إسبانيا مرض بالحُمَّى
وكنت أراه يَرْتعدُ ويرتجفُ عندما تَحُلُّ به النَّوْبَة
أَجَلْ! كان ذلك الإله يرتعدُ ويرتجفُ
فيغيضُ اللونُ من شفتيه الجبانتين
ويذوى البريقُ فى عينيه التى يرتاعُ العالمُ اليومَ لنظراتها!
ولقد سمعتُه يئنُّ ويتأوه!
أَجَلْ! ذلك اللِّسان الذى أمر الرومانَ
أن يُتابِعُوا أقوالَه ويدوّنوا خُطَبَهُ فى كُتُبِهم
سمعتُه يصرخ «أريد أن أَشْرَبَ يا تيتنيوس!»
مثلما تصرخ الطفلة المريضة. إيه أيتها الآلهة!
لكم يُدْهِشُنى أن أرى رجلاً بمثل هذا الضَّعْفِ والخَوَر
فى مُقَدِّمةِ الصفوفِ فى هذا العالم العظيم
حاملاً وحده قَصَبَ السَّبْق!

(هتاف وصوت نفير)

بـروتـــس : عادَ الجمهورُ للهُتاف؟

And here is the parody:

سيف الدين : عندما عدنا غداة الروع نجتاز الفلاة

وَهَبْطنا بَطْنَ وادٍ ليس يبدو مُنْتَهَاهْ
هَبَّتِ الرِّيحُ سَمُوماً عاصفَةْ
تملأُ الوادى فحيحاً ونباحاً وعواءَ
وغدا العِثْيَرُ فى الجَوِّ سحاباتِ سَوَادٍ
تحجبُ الشمْسَ كأنَّ الكونَ تاه
زاغتِ الأبصارُ وابيضَّتْ من الخَوْفِ الشِّفَاهْ
وبدا الركبُ شعاباً يذرعُ المَهْمَهَ فى كُلِّ اتجاه
كُلُّهم ينشد ما يعصمُهُ
كُلُّهُم يَرجو سبيلاً للنَّجَاةْ
وانْثَنى ذاك المُنَزَّهُ يستجيرُ ويستغيثْ
«أين سيف الدين»؟ صاح
«أين ذاك القائدُ المِغْوارُ أين مَضَى الكُمَاةْ؟»
لم أزلْ أذكرُ صوتَه
ضارعاً بل ذاهلاً بل غافلاً عَمَّا عَدَاهْ
وأنا فوقَ جَوَادٍ قد تَبَهْنَسْ
يَألفُ الظُّلْمَةَ بالأهوالِ يَأْنَسْ
سَلْ عُيُونَ المُهْرِ كيفَ وجدتِ صاحبَنَا المؤله
سَلْ ذِراعى كيفَ شَدَّتْهُ وألْقَتْهُ على سَرْجِى ذَليلاً يتأوَّه
«جئتَ سيفَ الدين»؟ صاح
«عَسْكَرى ياسَيْفُ طارتْ فى الرِّيَاح
«آه يَا سيفُ رعاكَ اللّه للإسلام.. ذُخْراً.. وَبَكَى

ذلكَ الحاكمُ ربُّ السّيْفِ
فاضَ الدَّمْعُ من عينيهِ كالطفلِ الصَّغيرِ
لم أُغافلْ صاحبَ العَيْنِ الهَتُونْ
بل نَفَخْتُ البوقَ واجتزتُ الكَتَائبْ
حاملاً إياه خلفي بينما صاحَ النَّفِيرْ
اتْبَعُوا سيفاً إلى حيثُ يسيرْ
ونَجَوْنا..

and here is, finally, an approximation of the last lines in 'modern' English:

Once on our way home across the desert
On the morrow of the great war we went
Down a steep vale that seemed endless;
The hot wind raged all round, scorching,
Filling the vale with hissing, barking, howling,
The dust rose in clouds of black, veiling
The sun, so that the world seemed lost!
With all eyes astray, all lips
For fear were white. The procession was
In disarray and the men ran in all
Directions, each seeking a refuge, each fending
For himself. Then our exalted superior
Started to call for help and succour!
"Where is Seif Al-Din?" He screamed,
"Where is that bold commander?"

'Where are all the great warriors?"
I still recall his voice rising in
Spupplication, unaware, as though stunned,
Of anything else but himself. I was,
However, mounted on such a stallion,
A steed so proud of its burden,
Accustomed to the dark, disaster-trained,
O ask my pony's eyes
How saw ye our deified friend!
Ask my arm how it pulled him up
And threw him down on my saddle,
Moaning in submission, "You're here" he said,
"O Seif! my soldiers have gone with the wind!"
"O Seif! may Allah save you as an asset
To Islam", he cried! That ruler,
Sword-master, wept like a little child!
I did not deceive the man with the
Rainy eye but blew my horn and surged ahead
Of my battalions, whilst my criers
Ordered that I be followed. We were saved.

* * *

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٢٣ ـ محمد الرفاعى ـ مجلة **صباح الخير** ـ نوفمبر ١٩٨١.

٢٤ ـ محمد السباعى ـ **رباعيات الخيام** ـ ترجمة ـ القاهرة ـ ١٩٣٣.

٢٥ ـ محمد عنانى ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **تاجر البندقية** ـ (ترجمة) ـ القاهرة ـ ١٩٨٦.

٢٦ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **جاسوس فى قصر السلطان** (مسرحية شعرية) ـ القاهرة ـ ١٩٩١.

٢٧ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **حلم ليلة صيف** (ترجمة) ـ القاهرة ـ ١٩٩٢.

٢٨ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **روميو وجوليت** (ترجمة) ـ دار غريب، القاهرة ـ ١٩٨٦.

٢٩ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **روميو وجوليت** (ترجمة) ـ القاهرة ـ ١٩٩٣.

٣٠ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **الفردوس المفقود** ـ (ترجمة) ـ القاهرة ـ ١٩٨٠.

٣١ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **فن الترجمة** ـ لونجمان ـ ١٩٩٢.

٣٢ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ ـ **يوليوس قيصر** ـ (ترجمة) ـ القاهرة ـ ١٩٩١.

* * *

THE LANGUAGE OF ARABIC FICTION

AN INTRODUCTION TO
MODERN STANDARD ARABIC
(MSA)

It is a sad fact that classical Arabic, whether in its archaic or modern forms, is being almost ignored in modern linguistic studies (at least in Egypt). Recent books and articles dealing with its nature and development, mostly apply the old methods of approach not only with respect to grammar, where a fresh analysis could be undertaken in terms of modern linguistic theories, but also with regard to its literary use, particularly the rhetoric of the written language. The rhetoric of the old language has been studied, more or less fully, in terms of the old theories – and so has that of modern Arabic, with unhappy results. As a modern form of the ancient language, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) has developed a new rhetoric even if derived from or based on that of the old language. The purpose of this essay is to throw light on this new rhetoric, within the wider framework of the development of Arabic in its written forms in the Twentieth Century. A separate essay will deal with the language of Naguib Mahfouz.

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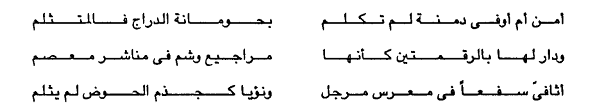
(i)

The use of the modern forms of classical Arabic in literatutre is fairly new, almost a twentieth-century phenomenon, though MSA was born much earlier, and appears different today from the parent tongue -- lexically, semantically, phonologically and, owing to the influence of Egyptian Arabic* and European languages, syntactically. The main contribution made has been in the field of phonetics and many good books have appeared (notably by El-Said Badawi and also by T. Hassan, K. Bishr and R. Abdul-Tawwab) though the authors here seem to be reading the palimpsest of a dead language, deciphering the 'signs' of MSA as indicative of the phonetic system of its progenitor. Whenever a study is made of MSA, particularly of its rhetoric, the underlying assumption is, with few exceptions, that it is the old language, even if adapted to serve different purposes, and the reader is often referred to the poetry and prose written over a thousand years ago as containing the criteria of literary excellence, and, consequently, as the only yardstick of judging modern literature. My contention is that as MSA developed, a novel rhetoric was developed, too, which

* Alternatively referred to as a dialect, or the vernacular, both inaccurate though useful short-hand descriptions.

requires a different approach, even if the universal principles of rhetoric apply to both of them (as they apply to all languages). It is to Professor Shoukry Ayad that I owe this distinction; and I have profited by the work of one of my colleagues, Dr. Abdul-Hakeem Radi, also one of Professor Ayad's students, in 'refining' my concepts of old and new 'rhetorics'.

The rhetoric of ancient Arabic, as used in pre-Islamic verse and the 'literary' language up to the eleventh century A.D., is more or less obsolete. It is at least as archaic as that language itself: nobody speaks it or writes it today, though the specialist can, of course, understand it and, with a little effort, imitate it. A couple of examples should be adequately illustrative, especially meant for the reader with a reasonable knowledge of Arabic. The first is the opening of the famous Ode of the pre-Islamic poet Zuhayr Ibn Abi Sulma.



Are there still blackened orts in the stone-waste of Ed-Darraj and El-Mutathallam, mute witnesses to where Umm Awfa once dwelt?

A lodging where she abode in Er-Rakmatan, that appears like criss-cross tattooings upon the sinews of a wrist --

Blackened stones marking the spot where the cauldron was slung and a trench like the debris of a cistern still unbreached.

(Arberry's translation)

The second is a few lines of prose from the opening of *Risalat Al-Ghufran* (Epistle on Forgiveness) by Abul-Ala' Al-Ma'arri:

> اللهم يسر وأعن. قد علم الجبر الذى نسب إليه جبرئيل، وهو فى كل الخيرات سبيل، ان فى مسكنى حماطة ما كانت قط افانية، ولا الناكزة بها غانية، وان فى طمرىّ لحضباً وكل بأذاتى، لو نطق لذكر شذاتى، ما هو بساكن فى الشقاب، ولا بمستشرف على النقاب.

> O, Allah! Facilitate (my task) and help (me). Al-Jabr, from which (name) is derived Gabriel, who is the means of doing all good, knows that in my dwelling there is a tree which is never moist, nor can a snake make a home of it... Under my tattered robe there is an adder intent on doing harm to me: if it were to speak it should mention my hardship. It does not live in a gorge nor does it rest outside a hole.

The two specimens, equally difficult, are separated by well over four centuries during which the language of literature became more or less distinguished from the language of everyday life. The difficulties of these and similar texts are mainly lexical, though there are semantic problems and a little problem with syntax. The translation provided hardly gives an accurate picture of the original Arabic text, but it will help the English reader to look at images and ideas that simply do not belong to our world. The Arabic reader will immediately realize how difficult it is to read either text without ample explanations and 'notes' primarily concerned with the lexical difficulties, that is, the words that have fallen out of use and are only to be treated as relics of a dead past. Some words look familiar enough, but they have changed their meaning -- a semantic difficulty of no mean proprtions. And though

the syntax seems regular, the flow of ideas in the prose passage is hardly regular at all. Hence the little difficulty I have mentioned. The medial clauses may not be too confusing but because the inner logic is convoluted, the apparent regularity of the prose text is only deceptive. One will be hard put to it, in fact, to 'modernize' this text in the way ancient European authors are, at least because of insuperable problems of 'interpretation': we may have as many 'modernized' versions of the literary text of antiquity as the scholars doing them.

The 'language of literature' was, perhaps from the start, distinguished from the language of everyday life which developed in many directions and often was used in writing about literature. Thus in the early days of Islam the Arabs were conscious of the existence of another language which came to be used by the early writers, who initially were 'narrators', that is, both historians and 'literary historians'. The language of speech had always been different, of course, from the language of literature, especially from poetry (being the main literary genre in ancient Arabic) but, now it was used in writing, most critics, who were more 'language specialists' than literary critics, tried to lay down principles for high and low styles. The situation was somewhat similar to that obtaining in ancient Rome when the language of Latin prose as used in comedy drifted away from that of poetry as used in tragedy -- as explained in detail by E. Auerbach. A literary historian like Abul-Faraj Al-Aspahani was decidedly on the side of the common language, using the language of speech in 'reporting' the incidents of his day and recording the literary events of the past, thus incurring the accusation of using a 'simple' style in a pejorative sense. It is interesting for our purposes to note that

when he recounts an incident reported to him he supplies the dialogue in direct speech as though 'reconstructing' the episode or even 'recreating' it from his own point of view. In each case he supplies a language of conversation quite different from that of the 'accepted' language of literature — free of the cumbersome rhetorical tricks and obviously not designed to pass for literature. His style is decidedly laconic and ellipsis is a dominat feature. Here is an excerpt from a curious narrative concerning a poet called Al-Sayyid Al-Himyary:

ومما يحكى عنه أنه اجتمع فى طريقه بامرأة تميمية إباضية، فأعجبها فقالت: أريد أن أتزوج بك ونحن على ظهر الطريق. قال: يكون كنكاح أم خارجة قبل حضور وليّ وشهود. فاستضحكت وقالت: ننظر فى هذا. وعلى ذلك فمن أنت؟ فقال:

إن تسألينى بقومى تسألى رجلاً فى ذروة العز من أحياء ذى يمن...

فقالت: قد عرفناك، ولا شىء أعجب من هذا: يمان وتميميه، ورافضى وإباضية، فكيف يجتمعان؟ فقال: بحسن رايك فىّ تسخو نفسك ولا يذكر أحدنا سلفاً ولا مذهباً...

(المجلد السابع - ص ٢٥٥ - ٢٥٦).

It is reported that while on a journey he met a woman from the tribe of Tameem who belonged to the dissenting Ibaadhi sect. She liked him and said, "I would like to be married to you whilst still on the road". "Then let it be quicker than the marriage of Umm Kharijah", he said, "before the arrival of a guardian and witnesses". She laughed coyly and said, "Well, we might look into that, but who are you anyway?" He said:

"If you enquire about my people you'll find that I am a man
At the apex of glory, from the people of Yemen, etc".

"We now know you", she said, "but nothing could be more odd: a Yemeni man and a Tameemi woman, a Rafidhi and an Ibaadhi— how could they be reconciled?"

"By thinking well of me your soul will grow generous," he said, "So let us not give a thought to our forebears or our several sects".

I have omitted the rest of the story, and the rest of the verse on the poet's noble parentage, as the 'specimen' provided sufficiently illustrates my point. In the eight Arabic lines there are six 'he said' or 'she said', and though the language seems 'easy' to the modern reader, the problem of interpreting the words and grasping the 'tones' cannot be minimized. The idiom of the spoken language is different here and the swiftness of reporting the action is astounding: a quick conversation follows, on the impossibility of proper marriage, for fear of objection by her family, and a solution is offered proposing a relationship on the basis of a 'marriage of pleasure', perfectly in accordance with Islam, the poet claims, which could therefore be kept secret. Here are the concluding lines:

فانصرفت معه وبات معرساً بها. وبلغ أهلها من الخوارج أمرها، فتوعدوها بالقتل وقالوا: تزوجت بكافر! فجحدت ذلك ولم يعلموا بالمتعة. فكانت مدة تختلف إليه على هذا السبيل من المتعة وتواصله حتى افترقا.

She went away with him and he spent his night with her as husband and wife. Her people, the dissident Kharijites, learned about this, threatened to kill her and said, "You

have married an infidel". But she denied and they did not know about the pleasure-marriage. For a period of time she consorted with him in this way of pleasure and their affair continued until they were separated.

There is no description of any scene or any attempt at building a 'situation' in the modern sense of the term, as the writer is professedly relating 'fact' not fiction. The exchanges between the protagonists may have been invented by Abul-Faraj Al-Aspahani, and the language used may be true to life, but in so far as that 'life' has ceased to exist in any imaginable sense, the language reflecting it appears archaic, even if exotically enjoyable.

The claim by most early writers that they reported and consistently dealt with fact not fiction may account for the sparse descriptive passages and analysis: the narrator is expected to be telling the truth and his credibility may be called in question if he allowed his imagination any free play at all. And this has had a definite effect on the development of Arabic. Needless to say, the fact that man's knowledge of the world was limited meant that the concepts he dealt with remained restricted to the ideas bequeathed by his ancestors. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the subjects dealt with in volume upon volume of 'anthologies' and 'histories' of Arabic literature (poetry in the main) are extremely limited and that the only reward I could get from reading *Yatimatul-Dahr* (The Time-Orphan) by Al-Tha'abibi — which is a huge collection of poetry and literary anecdotes of the early tenth century A. D. — was the vocabulary of debauchery. I find it amazing that with nearly six centuries of Arabic poetry behind them, the poets of the tenth century, defended by

Al-Tha'abibi as 'no less eloquent and rhetorical than the ancients", could still find no higher summits to conquer than lingusitic virtuosity, flaunting as they did their expert knowledge of the tradition. In fact, Al-Tha'abibi often interferes to explain and comment on the specimens of poetry he is providing, being conscious at least of the lexical difficulties of the literary language of his age. On pages 357-360 of volume 3 of that book I came across innumerable synonyms for key bawdy words, and I simply refer the reader to that book for a full illustration of my point.

The archaic language of literature did not die overnight: on the contrary, it survived many revolutions of taste, the decline and fall of many an empire until, barely a century ago, the new language, commonly known as Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) was born. Developed under the influence of modern European languages, the nascent variety of Arabic allowed for new concepts of literariness to suit the newly-evolved genres. In fact, archaic rhetoric never died in an absolute sense: it developed to seep into the idiom of MSA and become such an indivisible part of it that one is rarely required to fall back on the archaic language to appreciate the 'beauties' of a modern style. But more of this later.

* * *

(ii)

While drastic changes in our written language took place, another language was being developed almost independently – Egyptian Arabic. This has been more fortunate than the written language: it is the only variety recognized by the linguists as 'living' because 'spoken' and, fit for analysis as any of the living European languages of today's world. It is rightly assumed that each brand of the vernacular, varying from one Arab country to another, is generated from classical Arabic but, owing to the natural processes of linguistic development and under influences which again vary from one country to another, each came to acquire characteristics all its own to the extent that it can be studied independently of the parent language. Plausible as this assumption may be, the inordinately great emphasis laid on Egyptian Arabic as the only language truly alive and worthy of study has done injustice to the parent language which is the language of learning, of science and literature, and, to the extent that you cannot separate thought from the process of acquiring knowledge and imparting it, the process of handling ideas on paper, is also the language of thought. We have lived with this tendency in Egypt for over a quarter of a century now and scores of books and theses, both at M.A. and Ph. D. levels, have been written on various aspects of

Egyptian Arabic and their conclusions can hardly be said to improve our understanding of our national language in its written form. What I find amazing is the tendency of British and American linguists to encourage this tendency, to the point of disregarding Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) altogether. In view of the increasing number of 'English language' specialists who study Egyptian Arabic for higher degrees at the university, and the almost utter neglect MSA is receiving from Arabic specialists, one may be led to think that the language does not exist at all, that only archaic Arabic exists for the latter, and Egyptian Arabic (mainly used in conversation) for the former.

The fault lies, I believe, in the equation, in the minds of European scholars, of say, English as a living language with Egyptian Arabic as the living form of Arabic. It is a fault which stems from describing our vernacular as 'colloquial Arabic', perhaps simply a rendering of the misnomer عامية or دارجة, both meaning 'common'. But Egyptian Arabic is not simply a 'common' version of classical Arabic (whether the archaic or the modern standard): it is a language derived or adapted from, (or, simply, based on) classical Arabic – in so far as most of its words have classical Arabic origins – but which has developed in directions totally different from those of MSA: the vocabulary now includes words from languages as unrelated as Italian and Turkish, (with rich borrowings from English and French, of course), the phonology and syntax are different, and with the semantics all its own. This the linguists have proved beyond a shadow of doubt, though a specimen will help to show that even words which are derived directly from classical Arabic roots have changed their meaning to the point of being almost new ones:

– كان متكوم ع السرير زى البقجة، والهيصة فى الصالة بره على آخرها والظابط عمال يسأل: كنتو كام واحد؟ كان فيه حد غيركو؟ بص م الشباك لقى التاندا مفرودة والشمس بتنقح عليها، وحاجة كده زى ما تكون كورة بتدنلج بشويش فوقيها. وكيل النيابة قال: الراجل ده ما عندوش فكرة عن اللى حصل. سيبك منه. ماتضيعشى وقتك. ياللا بينا. رد عليه الظابط: يا أخى أنا لسه سامعه! من شوية بس. لكن معلهش. أنا وهو والزمن طويل...

which could be rendered as follows:

He was heaped on the bed like a bundle of rags, while the tumult in the hall outside was at its loudest. The officer kept asking:

- How many were you? Were there others?

He looked out of the window to find that the awning of his shop was spread out with the sun beating down on it and that something that looked like a ball rolled slowly down it. The prosecution attorney said:

- This man has no idea of what happened. Leave him alone, don't waste . our time. Let's go!

The officer replied:

- I heard him, I tell you, a little while ago! Well, never mind now! I will get him one day, however long it wil take me.

I have chosen this passage beacuse it provides the usual mixture of dialogue with narrative prose, representative of the actual language of daily life. It occurs in one of the plays written in Egyptian Arabic from beginning to end, which I have had the chance to examine recently. It struck me as exceptionally advanced in technique, with the contrast

maintained between outer description and narration on the one hand and the stream of consciousness of the character (accused of having taken part in a conspiracy to shoot an important official) on the other. The Arabist will find no difficulty in recognizing the lexical, semantic, syntactic and phonological differences between this language as used in both dialogue and narration, and classical Arabic in its archaic and modern forms. Some words do not exist in even the most modern dictionaries, with origins definitely obscure (هيصه) and (يدَنلج); others are taken directly from European languages: (صاله) and (تندا) are simply Italian; while others have roots in the written language whether they come from other languages or are indigenously Arabic (بقجة) (بره) (الظابط) (مفروده) (تنقح) (بشويش) (سيبك) (لسه) (شويه); and there are idiomatic expressions peculiar to Egyptian Arabic but not to be found in classical Arabic (زى.....) (على اخرها) (عمّال يسال) (حاجه كده) (ماعندوش فكره) (اللى حصل) (سيبك منه) (ماتضيعش وقتك) (ياللا بينا) (لسه سامعه) (من شويه بس) (لكن معلهش) (انا وهو والزمن طويل). The words can easily be traced back to old Arabic roots, but either the combination is new, or the idea is borrowed from a foreign language such as English. And, more important for our purposes, there are semantic changes which cannot be disregarded in any approach to this language: (زى) = 'shape' or 'form' in classical Arabic, but 'like, as, as though' (in زي ما تكون) in Egyptian Arabic; (حصل)= 'to stay', 'survive' (v.i.) or 'to get', 'attain', 'obtain' (v.t.) in classical; but 'to occur', 'happen' in Egyptian and in modern Arabic from the mid-sixteenth century; (حاجة)= 'need' in classical Arabic, but 'something' in Egyptian; and so on. The syntax is also peculiarly Egyptian, though I need hardly press the point any further. In fact I have done this passage into MSA, but the result is a different text:

كان يجلس على السرير كالصرة من الثياب، والجلبة فى الردهة خارج الغرفة أعلى ما تكون، بينما ظل الضابط يسأل: ماذا كان عددكم؟ هل كان هناك آخرون؟ ورنا من النافذة فرأى ظُلّة الدكان منشورة والشمس تسطع عليها ورأى شيئا كأنه كرة يتدحرج عليها فى بطء. وهنا قال وكيل النيابة: لا يعرف هذا الرجل شيئا عما حدث. اتركه ولا تضع وقتك. وهيا بنا نمضى. ورد عليه الضابط قائلا: لقد سمعته يتكلم منذ قليل. على أى حال فلن يفلت منى مهما طال الزمن.

No reader with any knowledge of Arabic could miss the obvious differences between the language of this passage and that of the earlier excerpts from Abul-Alaa and Zohayr Ibn Abi Sulma or Abul-Faraj Al-Aspahani. As used in the media and literature, MSA is often a translation of the Egyptian dialect — certain words are new, and others have had their meaning changed over the years: (الضابط) - a 'police, or an army, officer' is new; and (السرير) which had meant 'a throne' 'a neck', an 'empty coffin', or a 'comfortable chair' developed to mean a bed, pure and simple, with the earlier meanings dropped altogether, and so on. Especially in the dialogue, MSA idioms are often precise 'translations' of their dialectical equivalents. A structure like (هل كان هناك ...) is borrowed from the Egyptian dialectical (كان فيه...) which in turn is taken from the equivalent English or French expression, and (لا تضيع وقتك) is a direct translation by the vernacular of 'Don't waste your time' — an idea unfamiliar in classical Arabic.

* * *

(iii)

I have so far argued that while archaic classical Arabic and Egyptian Arabic have had their fair share of academic study, the mid-way variety of our language, modern standard Arabic (MSA), has suffered great neglect. Some scholars have devoted commendable efforts to 'coinages', such as Dr. Hilmi Khalil who studied the introduction of new words in Arabic both in the Abbasid period and in the modern age. But lexical innovation is only one aspect of linguistic development; it is based on, and it indirectly contributes to the untenable assumption that there is only *one* form of classical Arabic whose grammar and very nature are eternally fixed. The main argument used by the traditionalists who insist on disregarding the fundamental changes in our language is that the grammar has not changed, nor can it, according to them, change: any words and expressions won from European languages or from the vernacular are acceptable, they will tell you, as long as they enrich the one language we have inherited from our forefathers. However, grammar as we now understand it, has changed with the introduction of the many syntactical innovations needed by our living written Arabic – MSA. For grammar is not simply, as they claim, that a noun in the

nominative case should end in an 'o' or 'u' (otherwise 'on' or 'oun'): inflexions are only indications, not as vital today as syntax — and MSA, in many cases a written form of Egyptian Arabic, is extremely sensitive to syntax. In fact, inflexions are often ignored in public speeches, the language of advertisement, the press and in many books not meant to be literary. This the traditionalists frown upon as 'wrong' and 'wrong' marks of inflexion are regarded as mistakes which could be, and must be, corrected. Whether they could be corrected or not, the increasingly diminishing role of inflexions in MSA is only a result of a major change, namely its growing use of (and often reliance on) syntax.

There was a practical need behind this. Short vowels, the main signs of inflexion at the end of words, are not written as part of the Arabic script but are added optionally in educational and literary texts. This has forced writers, especially in the press, to rely solely on syntax. However, as a basic change in the word-order in the MSA sentence would give it a distinctly 'foreign' flavour, solutions have been found whereby the syntactic change does not adversely affect the 'Arabic' form of the structure. For instance, when faced with the difficulty of distinguishing the subject form the object without indicating the inflexions while still beginning with the verb, writers have tended to split the verb in two parts — a neutral verb+ noun. It had been easy when names were inflected to say

ضرب عمرواً زيدٌ

Zayd (on) beat Amr(an)

where the (on), and (an) at the end of the names are signs of the nominative and accusative cases respectively and you can change their

positions in the sentence with little loss to the sense. It is impossible to do this today when the names are long (and the subjects and objects in general tend to be complex, either because modified or qualified). You cannot today say (though the names are well known and confusion is unlikely):

انتقد طه حسين احمد امين

Taha Hussein/ Ahmed Amin criticized Taha Hussein/ Ahmed Amin.

For today we do not mark the end of a name, and a definite confusion will occur if the names are transposed. The following sentence is in total disarray:

هاجم محمد على احمد

It can mean:

(1) Mohamed attacked Ali Ahmed;
(2) Mohamed Ali attacked Ahmed;
(3) Mohamed was attacked by Ali Ahmed; or
(4) Mohamed Ali was attacked by Ahmed!!

Hence the formula:

قام + بـ + مهاجمة

To do/ carry out+ an attack

قام محمد بمهاجمة على احمد

Mohamed did attack Ali Ahmed

The neutral verb is now used almost universally as a modal auxiliary in the press. Gradually, the structure gained acceptance and respectability. It is quite common today to expect to have the real verb

after the subject *in the form of a noun:*

قام الرئيس بافتتاح الندوة.

The President did/ undertook the opening of the symposium

instead of the old

افتتح الرئيس الندوة

The President opened the symposium.

Another sign of the tendency to change is the avoidance of the passive voice deliberately and persistently. An alternative structure has been introduced, along the same lines as the above-indicated, namely the use of a neutral verb (تم or جـــري in this case) plus a noun. Thus, instead of (وُقعت المعاهدة)

The treaty has been signed.

you get

تم/ جرى توقيع المعاهدة

The avoidance of the passive verb (وقــعت) has the further advantage of averting a misreading for lack of short-vowel markings. The avoidance of the passive voice is especially important for the transmission of news. Today's paper (13-11-88) has the following headline:

ترشيح المحجوب لرئاسة مجلس الشعب

which can be read and understood without the help of inflexions or, indeed traditional grammar altogether. The meaning is 'Al-Mahjoub (has been) nominated (as) speaker of the People's Assembly', which could otherwise be expressed as follows:

رشح المحجوب رئيسا لمجلس الشعب.

This is, at least, ambiguous: for the initial verb could be read, without inflexions, as either active or passive. And the editor has opted for the nominal structure, so that the literal rendering is closer ro 'Nomination of Al-Mahjoub for the Speakership of the People's Assembly', a sentence with no finite verb but acceptable enough in 'journalese' (cf. E. Gowers' *The Complete Plain Words*).

Other changes in structure may be attributed to the influence of 'foreign' languages (English and French primarily) or to the influence of Egyptian Arabic. I can think, off-hand, of some structures with relative pronouns that are new in Arabic. An example is a recent sentence in the evening news-bulletin.

يعارض شامير إنشاء الدولة الفلسطينية التى يقول إنها تهدد أمن إسرائيل.

Shamir objects to the creation of the Palestinian State
which he says threatens Israel's security.

'Which he says' simply does not exist in classical Arabic, for the rule is to have the verb pertaining to 'which' immediately after it – 'which threatens'. In place of (التى) 'which', a purist would simply use (و) 'and', or, alternatively, interpret the clause by adding 'because' (لأنها), while indicating the 'he says' part with a different structure (فى زعمه) (حسبما يقول) at the end.

The above remarks are simply meant to show that MSA is not simply classical Arabic enriched with new words and ideas. Recent scholarship abroad, I am told, has confirmed this conclusion, but the books produced on Arabic in our part of the world are sorely disappointing. M. Abdul-Halim and A. Fiqi have collaborated on a book entitled *Arabic in the Media* (Cairo, 1988) which sets out to 'correct' common mistakes in the press, radio and television, but

totally fails to note these and similar changes. Needless to say, the new language born has developed its own 'system of rhetoric' which grew increasingly independent of the old one. While a full-length study remains to be made of the effect of linguistic change on the rhetoric of MSA, I hope to show in a later chapter that Naguib Mahfouz has contributed to the creation of a new rhetoric by drawing on the vast reservoir of classical Arabic as well as echoing Egyptian Arabic in his carefully adapted MSA dialogue. The needs of the novel, drama, and the short story, all unknown in their present form before the twentieth century, have forced him, in his eagerness to be as realistic (often as naturalistic) as he could be, to reproduce the 'living' tones of the vernacular when using 'MSA' expressions, while in his longer works he could freely manipulate classical Arabic idiom to paint his physical scenes and in the analysis of the states of mind of his characters. His development has not been linear, but some kind of line could be traced from the early to the later works – an independent study worthy of the scholar's efforts. I shall have to point out some of the salient features of classical rhetoric as part of our tradition, even of our mode of thought, which our contemporary writers have had to contend with.

* * *

(iv)

When Mahfouz started to write in the 1930s, two trends existed, even seemed to 'co-exist': the 'absolute' traditionalist trend, relying on nearly a thousand years of 'rhetoric', the second an innovative mode introduced by some scholars – notably Ahmad Amin and Salamah Moussa – and a few creative writers – Tewfiq Al-Hakeem and Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad among the better known. The traditionalists included poets who, starting with Mahmoud Sami El-Baroudi in the late Nineteenth century, established what came to be known as the 'Revivalist School'. They were, in other words, intent on reviving the tradition of ancient Arab poets, in respect of language, rhetorical devices, the structure of the poem, the metre and rhyme scheme. In prose the traditionalists wanted to emulate the eminent writers of the ninth century A.D., the 'Golden Age' of Arabic. Ahmed Shawqi led the traditionalist poets, and Mustafa Lutfi Al-Manfalouti and Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'i the prose writers. The success of the traditionalists was immense, even if judged solely by their influence: Shawqi's imitators were many, including Arabic Language specialists working for the Ministry of Education, and other Azharite graduates – Hifni Nassef, Ali Al-Jarem, Ali Al-Sa'ati, Mahmoud Ghoneim,

Mohammed Al-Asmar etc. Among the traditionalists, brilliant minds appeared, mostly French-educated, but totally immersed in the tradition. They could not break the fetters of classical rhetoric so that, for all their novel ideas and wide appeal (and great influence) their Arabic is read today as more ancient than modern, belonging more to the archaic variety than to modern standard Arabic. Of these we could simply mention Taha Hussein and Mohammed Hussein Haykal who dominated the twenties and thirties owing to their political influence as 'party' figures and some-time ministers.

The innovators, led as I have said by the scholars primarily (Amin and Moussa) and creative writers (Al-Hakeem and Al-Aqqad) were forced by a variety of factors to use Arabic as a vehicle of thought, not decoratively, and so make it possible for the scientists, educationists and journalists to use the bald style familiar in European languages without being accused of 'linguistic poverty' — and linguistic poverty had been till then synonymous with 'intellectual poverty' as Ahmad Amin himself explained in his series of books on the history of Islam. Salama Moussa's articles in the popular press called for the use of Arabic telegraphically, that is, as a system of signs rather than as a painting or an oration; and Al-Aqqad, a poet of no mean worth (though his reputation as an encyclopaedic writer and a militant journalist who espoused the political tenets of Al-Wafd Party, advocating liberal thought, culture and democracy, eclipsed his reputation as a poet) actually used Arabic in this way. My generation, who went to school in the forties and graduated in the fifties, were often puzzled by the amount of 'thought' Al-Aqqad's articles in the press included: and his enemies attacked him for being 'abstruse' or

'difficult', and his name, which literally meant a 'maker of knots' (a skilled job in the textile industry) encouraged the punsters to call him a 'knotty' (a complex) writer. Al-Hakeem was the real pioneer in this area as he was among the early writers, and undoubtedly the most gifted, who attempted drama as an independent literary genre in Arabic. The problem he encountered was how to adapt classical Arabic to dramatic dialogue in the modern sense. He wrote beautiful short stories in the newly evolved language of the press, developed a new kind of literary article that shed the trimmings of old rhetoric, and crowned his efforts in fiction by writing the two masterpieces *The Return of the Spirit* and *Diary of a Prosecution Attorney in the Provinces*, but his major contribution was to the theatre. He tried to use a language as close as possible to that spoken in daily life by the peopie, that is, the Egyptian dialect, while retaining the grammar and, often, the syntax, of classical Arabic. His motives were obvious: no one had as yet accepted Egyptian Arabic as a fit vehicle for 'literature', and the concept of a literature written in the local language was as far from the thinking of the Arabic reading public as it was unacceptable to scholars and educationists. Needless to say, the idea of 'folklore' as such had not yet been born. Al-Hakeem advocated a 'third language' by which he meant a mid-way language between classical Arabic, that everybody realized was obsolescent, and Egyptian Arabic. The result was a language midway between standard, rather than archaic, Arabic and Egyptian Arabic. It was an MSA version of the vernacular literally translated almost in the same way as Chaucer is translated into modern English nowadays. Let us now look at a random example from a play written as late as 1955 – *Her Majesty:*

انيســـة: وإذا وافق على طلاقك؟
وجـــدان: لن يوافق ابداً
انيســـة: نادية هنا
وجـــدان: (كالمذهولة) حمدى لن يوافق ابداً.. ابداً..
انيســـة: قلت لك نادية
وجـــدان: (تنادى بصوت عصبى) حمدى! حمدى! حمدى!
حـــمـــدى: (يظهر بسرعة) ماذا جرى؟ ماذا بك يا وجدان؟
وجـــدان: (مرتجفة) اهذا صحيح يا حمدى؟ أممكن هذا يا حمدى؟
حـــمـــدى: مالك ترتعشين هكذا؟
وجـــدان: "ماما" تقول..
انيســـة: دعينا وحدنا لحظة.. انا اقول له بنفسى..

Anisah: And if he agrees to divorce you?

Wogdan: He will never agree.

Anisah: Nadia is here!

Wogdan: (***as though stunned***) Hamdy will never agree, never!

Anisah: I said Nadia is —

Wogdan: (***calling nervously***) Hamdy, Hamdy, Hamdy!

Hamdy: (***quickly appearing***) What happened? What's the matter with you, Wogdan?

Wogdan: (***trembling***) Is this true, Hamdy? Is this possible, Hamdy?

Hamdy: Why are you trembling like that?

Wogdan: Mother says..

Anisah: Leave us alone for a minute, will you? I shall tell him myself!

Al-Hakeem's success is remarkable; for all intents and purposes the text is a translation of the vernacular dialogue into standard Arabic and you do come across a line here and there that can be read as either vernacular or standard. But some of Al-Hakeem's plays had to be done into the vernacular proper before being presented on the stage; nor have his plays in general been accepted as 'literature' by the literary 'authorities' (the press and the universities) perhaps partly because of the language. Even today, his 'third language' is regarded with suspicion by the traditionalists and rejected outright by the 'realists'. In drama, we are told, either be realistically 'low' as is common in comedy or tragically 'high' as in parts of Shakespeare and in Racine and Corneille: you simply cannot stick to a uniform language that is neither high nor low, pretending that it is classical when it is not, expecting it to be read as vernacular when it cannot be. Naguib Mahfouz was saved from this fate, as I hope to show in a separate chapter because, rather than theorizing too much about language, he got to grips with the actual problems in practice: drawing on the vast reservoir of classical Arabic when he needed solid and accurate expression, but making use of dialectal 'tone' in dialogue to maintain his living language. His results are impressive enough to warrant the following section on the nature of archaic rhetoric and MSA idiom.

* * *

(v)

Arabic was born in the desert and the influence of the 'open space' setting and nomadic life on Arabic cannot be exaggerated. Travelling was slow and the distances covered great. People lived practically in the open air (the weather being pleasantly warm in the winter, scorchingly hot in the summer) and had to speak loudly if only to make themselves heard. The 'rhythm' of life in general was slow, a fact amply reflected in the earliest extant specimens of Arabic in verse or prose. In verse the movement of the ideas is slow, and the line is often punctuated by long-drawn vowels, often relying on repetition and redundance. The main prose form bequeathed by ancient Arabic is oratory, a literary genre wholly dependent on the power of the living voice in producing an effect on the listeners. In general, the language was addressed to the ear not to the eye and as writing was little known in Arabia people wanted to be heard and remembered: devices serving both purposes were naturally regarded as essential to good poetry and accepted as part of the craft of writing itself. The poetic devices familiar in the classical languages became popular, (from metaphor, synecdoche and euphemism to litotes, oxymoron and antithesis) but the most important feature was pleonasm. Words were carefully used to create symmetrical patterns – very pleasant to hear

but almost ridiculous if literally done into a modern European language. I shall again give examples separated by four centuries, the first a line from the same Ode by Zuhayr Ibn Abi Sulma quoted earlier, actually, the line that follows the last quoted ones:

ولما عرفت الدار قلت لربعها   الا انعم صباحاً ايها الربع واسلم

"When I recognized the abode,
I said to that lodging-place:
'Good morning to you, lodging-place:
Well may you fare'

(Arberry's translation)

and the second from a most famous poem by Al-Mutanabbi, the master-craftsman of Arabic verse par excellence:

فإن امرض فما مرض اصطباری   وإن احمم فما حم اعتزامی

If I be sick, my fortitude is not sick,
And if I be feverish, my resolution is not feverish.

There are others, of course, much less 'elegant' or 'revered' but no less essential to our consciousness of our literary tradition: indeed, some of these are not simply part of the old rhetoric but have come to constitute part of the idiom of classical Arabic itself.

That a rhetorical tradition comes to be part of the idiom of a language is hardly confined to Arabic; what is peculiarly 'Arabic' is the capacity for survival, and the *amount* of idioms based on metaphor that survived. Even today, when an Arab wishes to eloquently express the idea of, say, a 'futile effort' he would not say 'in vain' or 'to no

avail' (the MSA term for which is عبثا) but rather كناطح صخرة that is, 'like a man head-butting a rock'. The sentence does stand on its own, though it is taken from a line of verse which few people remember:

كناطح صخرة يومًا ليوهنها فلم يضرها واوهى قرنه الوعل

like a stag that one day head-butted a rock
To weaken it; it did no harm to it but
Rather weakened its own antler

The reference to the stag is completely forgotten, and the rest of the line, being redundant, is omitted.

Pleonasm actually became an essential feature of the idiomatic structure of classical Arabic, to the extent that a good style came to be characterized by the slow pace of the thought and, sometimes, by verbosity. A writer whose command of classical Arabic is 'adequate' may shun the redundancies, but he cannot shy away from such idioms as endow his style with a genuine Arabic flavour: the يوما (one day) of the line of verse quoted above often becomes in writing فى يوم من الايام 'on a day of the days'. 'I don't know for what reason' becomes لا اعرف لأى سبب من الاسباب (I don't know for what reason of the reasons); 'This shouldn't fulfil any need' لن يفى هذا بحاجة من الحاجات (this shouldn't fulfil any need of the needs) – and so on.

In فقه اللغة وسر العربية (*Arabic Philology and the Secret of Arabic*) by Al-Tha'alibi, we come across a good deal of idiomatic expressions which remain enigmatic. It was the habit of the ancient Arabs, Al-Tha'alibi tells us, to add a meaningless, but morphologically similar, word to a well-known epithet for the sake of emphasis. In

time the new word would acquire the meaning of the original epithet, even if used by itself. Examples are اديب اريب، مـعن مـفن، عطشـان نطشـان and خـراب يبـاب: and I could think of many other examples which, being verbs not epithets, have had a better fate. Other forms of 'combination' (verging on collocation), rather than 'compounding', will be found even in today's Arabic: you would describe a man who is 'livid' with rage as a man 'foaming at the mouth' (يـرغـى ويـزبـد) or 'thundering' (يرعـد ويبـرق) – literally 'with thunder and lightning' in his face – or that he اقـام واقـعـد , that is, made a big stir – literally 'caused people to stand and sit' etc. Resorting to a plethora of epithets as is done by great authors, has occasionally been interpreted as the peculiar Arabic way of expressing 'degree', for Arabic has no equivalent for the word 'very' in English, or 'too', (or, of course, the French 'tres' and 'trop'). But you cannot invoke this in defence of the great currency of morphologically similar words with close enough meanings: إجابة شـافيـة (satisfactory answer) إجـابة وافيـة (full) إجـابة ضـافيـة (extensive) إجـابة كـافيـة (adequate) and so on. If used in succession, these words have a pleasing effect, no doubt, for Arabic speaks to the ear, primarily, إجابة كافية شافية وافية ضافية but then the individual meanings of the words may be said to *add* to, rather than confirm, one another. Nor does the need to indicate degree explain why writers, from pre-Islamic days till today, have been fond of the rhyme words in prose. The nearest to this is to say in English, facetiously of course, 'don't grumble lest you stumble'. A famous orator in pre-Islamic days has left us the following opening phrases of a famous speech:

من عاش مات، ومن مات فات، وكل ما هو آت آت..

He who lives must die; he who dies is gone;
And everything that will come must come.

And equally famous are the opening phrases of the speech made by Al-Hajjaj to the people of Iraq:

يا اهل العراق، يا اهل الشقاق والنفاق..

O people of Iraq, O people of dissension and hypocrisy..

Sometimes the dead figures of speech which, I have suggested, have come to constitute part of the idiom of classical Arabic, are used as a decorative gloss but are celebrated as a sign of 'good Arabic'. A typical example from Ahmad Hassan El-Zayyat, a famous traditionalist, illustrates my point:

> تنكر له الزمن واربد وجهه، وقلب له ظهر المجن، فأبدله باليسر عسراً، وبالغنى فقراً، وبالنعيم شقوة..
>
> "Time turned against him, and, with a clouded, scowling face, *confronted him with the warlike side of the shield*: it replaced his ease with hardship, his wealth with poverty, and his bliss with misery".

Apart from the regular features of parallelism and antithesis – not unfamiliar in the classical heritage of all nations – there is the dead metaphor in Arabic (which comes alive in the translation!) of turning the shield to show its warlike side as a sign of antagonism. I have italicized the clause, though the preceding one is also a metaphor, in order to point out the dead figure. Most people who use this and similar expressions are rarely aware of their origins or of the authors who had first coined them. Indeed, authors of standard books on language, and lexicographers, cannot agree on the origins of most idioms. By 'افرخ روعه' is generally meant that 'he is no longer afraid', but no interpretation seems satisfactory as yet. Al-Zamakhshari says that

since it literally means 'his fear, birdlike, has had its eggs hatched', the origin must be that his fear, now reassured about the hatching of its eggs, has flown away – a flimsy enough explanation, in so far as no mother bird could desert the newly hatched brood. The same thing applies to استاصل شافتهم (lit. he removed their scab) (that is, he eradicated them) which continues to puzzle me! Some are, of course, quite easy to understand and explain away (such as لم ينبس ببنت شفة - literally, he did not let out a single daughter of a lip) but owing to historical factors which I shall not go into, if only for lack of space, classical Arabic came to be burdened with thousands of expressions which were hallowed through long use and are now impossible to dislodge.

When the language was alive, these and similar idiomatic expressions came naturally and had a definite significance for the people: the dialects of the various tribes of ancient Arabia eventually melted into the crucible of Islam, with the Quraysh dialect (used by the Quran) proving to be the dominant one. Many of the words and expressions that had been current in the dialects of smaller or weaker tribes became peripheral and eventually obsolete. They still existed, however, in the poems and orations preserved by the oral tradition until the time came for them to be transcribed in the late Seventh Century A.D. and for two centuries they intermittently appeared in the verse of those poets who looked back nostalgically to pre-Islamic days when nomadic life was the rule, city life the exception. The numerous 'names' (epithets really) of the lion, the camel, the sword, dates and other features of bedouin life (exceeding a thousand each in certain cases) have been explained by the fact that each tribe had different names for them and that lexicographers had to record each and every

word they came across, especially in the verse. The result is, as is only to be expected, that by the tenth century A. D. the vocabulary and idiomatic expressions available to the Arabic writer or poet were so varied that his choice was determined by personal preference alone. Sometimes you came across different expressions which appeared to mean the same thing while their implications could not be the same, either because they were different, as dead figures of speech, in literary value, or because they referred you, by their different origins, to different situations in Arabian history, or because their connotations were simply different. If you want to say 'He came back empty-handed' you could easily find the equivalent in صفر اليدين or you could use another figure خاوى الوفاض (with an empty vessel) or the common (though mysterious in origin) عاد بخفى حنين (He returned with Hunayn's slippers). All three are in fact used today alternatively without indicating a level of style or determining the literary value of the phrase. For centuries, from the times of the fragmentation of the Islamic state (Eleventh century) to the early Twentieth century, classical Arabic was written by many non-Arabs who, in an attempt to sound genuinely Arabic, emulated the classical writers of pre-Islamic and early Islamic days. The deterioration of literary taste was inevitable: and the general quality of the output of the period was deplorable. But it was not, of course, only non-Arabs who were responsible for such deterioration: it was a combination of factors foremost among which was the formal criticism of the theorists. As Professor Mandour has convincingly shown in his *The Methodical Criticism of the Arabs* (النقد المنهجى عند العرب), the writer's interest from the Eleventh century onward centered on the formal aspects of the work – the poem or the epistle (the two dominant genres) – with the analysis focusing almost totally on language.

The whole range of stylistic devices familiar in classical languages came to be studied and celebrated. Every trick of expression, from the simple pun to the complex *occupatio*, was examined and talked about. Coupled with the tendency of Arabic to pleonasm, the literary output at the turn of the Nineteenth century was exceptionally poor. The French Expedition to Egypt is often credited with establishing the long-delayed links between the Arab world and Europe; and it was the introduction of the printing press, an early specimen of which had been supplied by the French, that bridged the gap between the educated elite (brought up on traditional learning) and the populace. The rest of the century saw many Egyptians leave for France to study modern sciences and the European society, and the effect on Arabic was great. But it was not until early in the twentieth century that the 'revival' began.

In inception the revival was nationalist in character. The Egyptians wanted to restore to their country the glories of the past, and the past was now both Arab and Pharaonic. Going to the past had meant, in part, a revival of the Arabic tradition before the tenth century. Strangely, the ideal was not sought in the living specimens of real Arabic literature, that is, the poetry and prose produced by those original and talented Arab minds that gave us centuries of fine literature, but rather in the critical concepts which in the seventh century A.D. established the canon for what we today regard as 'artificial' style. Professor Mandour's book has attacked such unprecedented concern with 'artifice'; and an excerpt from an early eleventh-century 'critic' will illustrate how this led to the central malaise of rhetorical Arabic, namely tautology.

Abu Hilal Al-Askari, in the first decade of the eleventh century, wrote his *The Two Crafts*, that is, the craft of poetry and the craft of prose. In chapter II he states that the ideal in writing does not concern 'ideas' but rather language:

> وليس الشأن فى إيراد المعانى، لأن المعانى يعرفها العربى والعجمى، والقروى والبدوى، وإنما هو فى جودة اللفظ وصفائه، وحسنه وبهائه، ونزاهته ونقائه، وكثرة طلاوته ومائه، مع صحة السبك والتركيب، والخلو من أود النظم والتأليف..
>
> (ص ٣٣).

> It is not a matter of providing us with ideas, for the ideas are known to Arabs and non-Arabs alike, to city dwellers and desert people. But it is a matter of picking good and pure words – words that are fine and attractive, unadulterated and immaculate, with a good deal of charm and freshness (literally: water). Structure should be correct, too, and free of the awkwardness of verse and the clumsiness of prose.

This may be close enough to the neo-classical ideal, as found in a Pope or a Johnson, but the terms in which the idea is expressed are, as I have said, vague. A serious effort will be required to decipher such a difficult statement as the following on the ideal of tautology:

> الكلام أيدك الله يحسن بسلاسته وسهولته، ونصاعته وتخير لفظه وإصابه معناه، وجودة مطالعه ولين مقاطعه، واستواء تقاسيمه وتعادل أطرافه وتشبه أعجازه بهواديه، وموافقة مآخيره لباديه، مع قلة ضروراته، فتجد المنظوم مثل المنثور فى سهولة مطلعه، وجودة مقطعه، وحسن رصفه وتأليفه، وكمال صوغه وتركيبه.
>
> (ص ٣١).

> Speech, God support thee, is good in as much as it is plain, easy-flowing, and pure; that is, when the words are well-chosen, the ideas correct, the opening fine and the divisions not abrupt; when the parts are balanced and the portions are equal, so that the subsequent sentence is similar to its antecedent, and the former is harmonious with the latter, provided no excessive use is made of poetic license. Thus prose would be, like verse, characterized by easy ascent, and well planned stops, good structure and composition, and perfect formulation and construction.

Not too difficult to understand, perhaps, but the meaning is odd: apart from the idea of balance and parallelism, the emphasis is on the need for tautology. And, as I have said, it was this emphasis that determined the survival of ancient rhetoric for centuries. In the hands of the writers who wrote the first novels in Arabic, the ideals of ancient rhetoric did not seem to conflict with the requirements of the new genre. Taha Hussein, the arch-traditionalist I have referred to, may be excused for being so rhetorical in this sense as he was blind and the power of living rhythm may account for the tautology, but how can we justify the style of Muhammad Hussein Haykal? Here are two specimens from Taha Hussein, again from the opening of two works of fiction, *The Stream of Days* (literally *The Days)* and T*orment in the Land* (literally *The Tormented People of the Earth*, and my translation will be as literal as possible)

١ ـ لايذكر لهذا اليوم اسماً، ولا يستطيع أن يضعه حيث وضعه الله من الشهر والسنة، بل لا يستطيع أن يذكر من هذا اليوم وقتا بعينه، وإنما يقرب ذلك تقريبا.

٢ - إلى الذين يحرقهم الشوق إلى العدل، وإلى الذين يؤرقهم الخوف من العدل، إلى أولئك وهؤلاء جميعا أسوق هذا الحديث.

إلى الذين يجدون ما لا ينفقون، وإلى الذين لا يجدون ما ينفقون، يساق هذا الحديث.

لا أجد لتصوير الحياة فى مصر أثناء الأعوام الأخيرة من العهد الماضى، أدق من هذين الاهدائيين اللذين يقرؤهما كل من تناول الكتاب، فقد كان المصريون فى تلك الأعوام القريبة البعيدة فريقين، أحدهما يصور الكثرة الكثيرة البائسة التى تتحرق شوقاً إلى العدل مصبحة وممسية وفيما بين ذلك من آناء الليل وأطراف النهار، والآخر يصور القلة القليلة التى تشفق من العدل حين تستقبل ضوء النهار وتفزع من العدل حين تجنها ظلمة الليل.

1 - He cannot remember the name of that day, nor can he place it where God had placed it in a specific month and a specific year. He cannot even remember what particular time it was on that day, but rather does it by approximation.

2 - To those who have a burning longing for justice, and to those who are sleepless for fear of justice; to these and those alike I address my speech.

To those who find what they do not spend, and to those who do not find what to spend, this speech is addressed.

I cannot find a more accurate statement to illustrate life in Egypt in the last (few) years of the past era than these two statements of dedication which will be read by everybody who picks up this book. The Egyptians in those years, so near yet so distant, could be divided in two parties. The first represented the miserable majority that yearned for justice, at morning and evening, as well as the times in between, whether at night or by day. The

> other represented the small minority who were afraid of justice when they received the light of day, and terrified by justice when they were hidden by the darkness of night.

The repetition may be defended as part of a special 'style', for, after all, *le style c'est l'homme*; but this is hardly a 'style' in the usual sense of the word: it is rather a 'system' – a linguistic pattern reflecting a mode of thought and a specific method of apprehending and projecting reality. 'Still a style', F. L. Lucas or J.M. Murray will assure us, but if the style becomes widespread enough, rather than narrowly individual, I find myself inclined to regard it as a 'language'. And it is in this sense that we could speak today of the language of 'fiction' in general, or of any of the new genres in European literature, of the 'lyrical novel', 'black comedy', the 'theatre of the absurd' and so on. Indeed, it is in this sense, too, that we can talk of the language of Spenser, the language of Shakespeare, the language of Milton, the language of Wordsworth or the language of Ezra Pound. It is a sign of the vitality of English that Eliot could not use the language of any of his predecessors, nor could Margaret Drabble use the language of Jane Austen. When the mind of Europe changed, the language was both a tool in effecting the change and a testimony of the change; and this is precisely the case with Arabic. The mind of Egypt underwent a change tantamount to a basic transformation; the new language helped to bring it about as much as it is now a testimony of it. Before concluding this section, I would like to give two specimens from Haykal, one from a novel written in 1911 and published a short time before the first world war, *Zeinab*, the second from an article included in a book that first appeared in 1933, though the article had been

published earlier in a newspaper (not specified in the *Preface*) under the title *Tyrants and the Freedom of the Pen* (from the book *A Literary Revolution*). Here is the first from *Zeinab*: (p. 98)

(Again the translation will be as literal as possible)

(١) وما كادت تهتك يد الصبح ستار الليل حتى نبا به مضجعه، وصاحبه القلق، فانحدر إلى الجامع، وما عهده به فى تلك الساعة التى عرفها ساعة هجود وهمود. وانساب وسط ظلمات يتسلل فيها النور كما يتسلل الأمل إلى قلب اليائس، والسماء لم تميز بعد، قد بهت عليها حجاب الليل الهزيم.

(٢) فى عصور الظلمة التى تمر بالأمم انا بعد آن يعمد الباطشون البغاة إلى تقييد حرية القول والكتابة. وفى سبيل هذا يصلون أرباب الأقلام حربا لا رحمة فيها ولا هوادة: فمن إرهاب إلى سجن إلى نفى وتشريد. وهم فى حربهم هذه يندفعون ضد الكتاب كاشرة أنيابهم، محمارة عيونهم، مفتحة خياشيمهم، اشبه الأشياء بالكواسر المفترسة حين يغريها منظر الدم فيهيج كل غرائزهم الوحشية، ولا يهدأ لهم من بعد ذلك بال ولا يطمئن لهم خاطر إلا إذا اطمانوا إلى أنهم حطموا تلك الأقلام إلى غير عودة إلى الكتابة وأذلوا نفوس حملتها إذلالا لا قومة لهم من بعده.

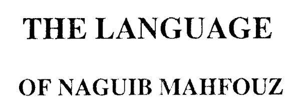
1- As soon as the hand of the morning tore up the curtains of night, his bed threw him out. With anxiety as companion, he went down to the mosque, though little accustomed to it at this hour, known to him as an hour of sleep and lifelessness. He 'flowed' amidst tenebrous glooms wherein light stole like hope stealing into the hearts of the desperate, while the sky was hardly distinguishable yet, with the veil of the receding night grown pale over it.

2- In the ages of darkness which pass by nations from time to time, the unjust oppressors resort to restricting the freedom of speech and writing. To this end, they

> wage a ruthless and relentless war against pen-users, involving persecution, imprisonment, exile and homelessness. In this war of theirs, they attack writers with sharp teeth, their eyes burning bright, and their nostrils blown wide, like wild beasts tempted by the sight of blood. With their beastly instincts aroused, they would not have a quiet heart or a reassured soul until they are reassured that they have destroyed those pens to make them unable to write again, and have humiliated the spirits of their bearers to make them unable to stand up again.

This language has been variously defended as 'poetic', 'highly literary' or as peculiar to the early Haykal who later developed a different 'style' altogether. But my point stands: when the *rhetoric* of a language comes to constitute an indivisible part of its *general idiom*, then what we have is a quality of the language not of a particular style. Some of the figures of speech in the first passage are dead, having been reduced to common idioms; but some are not, being simply out of place in the narrative, added to give the text a deliberate 'literary' flavour. They are still, however, figures of speech and are accepted as essential to the traditional literary 'style'. In the second extract, the writer is being deliberately 'poetic' although his subject is socio-political and his article is contributed to a newspaper and therefore intended for the general public. The image here is carefully built up and developed in sentence after sentence until the idea is 'complete'. But the idea is simple really and need not have taken so many words to put across. Tautology is to be found here too, no doubt, though not so much as in Taha Hussein.

Amazingly, the elliptical style of some of the early writers and of parts of the Quran did not appeal to the traditionalists at all. If anything, they were against it. It did not appeal to the innovators either – for these had the ideal of absolute clarity full in view and as many of them were English-educated (Hussein and Haykal were French-educated) they liked to pride themselves on being able to emulate the capacity of English for clarity and economy of expression. Al-Aqqad and Al-Mazini were among the exponents of this trend; but they are less important for our purposes because they were not, in the main, novelists and, though they wrote poetry, their major contribution was to non-fictional prose (like Ahmed Amin and Salama Moussa). So much for the 'scene' in the thirties when Naguib Mahfouz started to write his fiction. His development requires, I have suggested, an independent study; but I can, I hope, give an idea, against this background, of the road he travelled to establish a language of fiction capable of adapting itself to whatever is needed by the modern novelist. This is the subject of the next chapter.



THE LANGUAGE

OF NAGUIB MAHFOUZ

A Study in Development

No one can generalize about the language of a varied and prolific writer without running the risk of oversimplification. The fact is that Mahfouz developed over the years from a traditionalist, fighting or, at least, resenting the confines of his own 'rhetoric', to a modernist experimenting with language and finally succeeding in adapting it to suit his own purposes. His initial position was that of a traditionalist who cared more about *sounding* truly Arabic (by using classical rhetoric, now indistinguishable from the idiom of any 'good' style) than about the needs of his art. For almost a decade his language showed signs of conflict, as he hesitated, often oscillating between two extremes, and often using more than one 'stylistic mode'. Modern standard Arabic had, by the thirties, when he published his first novels, established itself as the language of the intelligentsia, while archaic Arabic had been recognized to be so. But the classical ideal had not been banished for ever: it remained as an ideal, and it fed the early 'styles' of Mahfouz. Uptill then, the Egyptian dialect had been kept at bay, in spite of the personal temptations for Mahfouz, if only because no writer aspiring to recognition by the literary establishment could dare flirt with it.

The second stage, extending over thirty years or more, started with the serialization in *Al-Risalah Al-Jadidah*, edited by Youssef Al-Siba'i, of his great novel, the first in the famous trilogy, *Bayn*

Al-Qasrayn. The ideal here was the realism-naturalism of the great Europeans – Zola, Balzac and Dickens, primarily, but Dostoevsky and Tolstoy as well. While he focused on the life of the lower orders of the society he could not but resort to their language as the perfect medium of reflecting their thought-processes and states of mind: but this had to be done into standard Arabic, especially in the dialogue, marking a new stage in his development. He could now adapt his style to represent inner and outer realities, varying his language to make it capable of the quick rhythms as well as the old lapidary, often stately rhythms of ancient Arabic. His major achievement was not, however, in the dialogue, but in evolving a novel language for narration and description.

The last stage is hardly uniform or consistent, for here we have a master-craftsman who could absorb and occasionally advance beyond the techniques of the Europeans, and, consciously, I am sure, profit by their variety in adjusting his language to the requirements of his art – now becoming so varied in its objectives as to defy definition. I prefer to call this stage 'experimental' in so far as it has allowed him to produce different styles, each designed to produce a different effect, and in view of the fact that his language, now unquestionably 'modern', varies in its use of 'rhetoric' as defined in today's linguistic arts.

The previous chapter will have shown adequately, I hope, what I mean by each category of Arabic I refer to – archaic, modern standard and Egyptian. I also hope that the central argument I have made about rhetoric coming to constitute an indivisible part of the idiom of classical Arabic will help to show how as Naguib Mahfouz developed he had to find a new idiom relying on other sources than classical rhetoric.

(i)

As late as his fourth novel, *Rhodopis*, 1943 (with a decade of writing behind him) Mahfouz displays all the signs of a writer fighting to shake off the rhetorical tradition of his ancestors. He could not do it all at once, for in those days he still wanted to court the traditionalist-educated elite regardless of his innovations in his chosen linguistic art. The very first page of the novel, too long to quote in full, is brimming with the idiom of archaic Arabic, with expressions directly borrowed from the Holy Quran:

A harbinger of His mercy	بيْنَ يَدَىْ رَحْمته
They turned their faces from one part of the heavens to another	قلّبوا وُجُوهَهم فى السّماء
With light and heavy burdens	خِفافًا وثِقالاً

The references are direct, I have suggested, and the reader cannot miss them. But these are 'echoes' of Quranic language and do not constitute an essential part of the structure. Now look at the opening sentences:

لاحت فى الافق الشرقى تباشير ذلك اليوم من شهر بشنس المنطوى فى اثناء الزمان منذ
اربعة الاف سنة. وكان الكاهن الاكبر لمعبد الرب سوتيس يتطلع إلى صفحة السماء
بعينين ذابلتين اضناهما التعب طوال الليل وإنه لفى تطلعه إذ عثر بصره بالشعرى
اليمانية يتألق نورها فى كبد السماء، فتهلل وجهه بالبشر وخفق قلبه بالفرح

which translates, freely, as follows:

As the early lights of that day of the month of Bashans(1) streaked the eastern horizon, a day enfolded in ancient

(1) A month in the Coptic calendar roughly corresponding to May.

> times four thousand years ago, Soutis, the Grand Priest of the temple of God turned his withered eyes, weary with the night-long watch, to the face of the heavens. At length he sighted Sirius brilliantly glittering in mid-sky: his face brightened with joy, and his heart throbbed with excitement.

I say 'freely' because I have allowed myself those freedoms generally accepted today in literary translation. Literally rendered, however, the idiom will be almost too obtrusive: the 'early lights' of the first line is really the 'early good signs' or even the good 'omens'; 'enfolded in ancient times' is really 'folded in the folds of time'; the 'night-long watch' is in the Arabic text 'the night-long fatigue'; 'mid-sky' is literally the 'liver of the sky' (the liver being used as a synonym for the heart in idiomatic Arabic); and the final 'excitement' is yet another 'joy'.

Apart from the idiom, the syntax reflects a regularity of thought that establishes a pattern easily responded to by the classicists. The 'action' at the opening of the novel, the sighting of Sirius, the Dog Star, which marks the beginning of the summer in Egypt and the flooding of the Nile, is deliberately calculated to create a link between people's life in the Nile Valley, almost totally dependent on Nile water, and the stars of Heaven above! That the Grand Priest should sight the star is only too natural, and the language here, alive with references to the Quran, creates the air of familiarity needed if the incidents which had taken place in a past so distant are to be accepted as part of the Egyptian life, now 'throbbing' with the religious zeal of another religion – Islam. The idiom is therefore needed for a cultural

puropse, and Mahfouz uses it to maintain that cultural tone throughout. At the time, he could only distance himself from present reality and 'enfold' everything in the language of the ancients, even if Pharaonic Egypt was to be expressed in terms of Islamic Egypt (Arabic, the language of the Quran, being the medium).

It is, however, in the dialogue that the ancient idiom appears incongruous. On pages 181-182 an interesting dialogue between Rhodopis and the king indicates that neither in prose nor in 'dramatic' dialogue was Mahfouz willing to abandon the classical tradition:

ـ مولاى! إن الناس كالسفينة الضالة بلاسكان، تحملها الرياح كيفما تشاء.

فقال بوعد مخيف:

ـ سأذهب ريحهم!

وعاودتها المخاوف والشكوك، وخانها صبرها فى تلك اللحظة فقالت:

ـ ينبغى أن نستوصى بالحكمة، وأن نتراجع زمنا قصيرا مختارين، وإن يوم النصر لقريب.

فنظر إليها بغرابة وقال:

ـ أتشيرين على بالخضوع يا رادوبيس؟

فضمته إلى صدرها وقد آلمتها لهجته، ثم قالت وقد فاضت عيناها بدمع سخين:

ـ أحرى بمن يتحفز للوثبة الكبرى أن ينكمش أقداما، والنصر رهين بالنهاية.

فتأوه الملك ثم قال:

ـ آه يا رادوبيس! إذا كنت أنت تتجاهلين نفسى، فمنذا الذى يمكن أن يعرفها؟ أنا من إذا نزل مرغما على إرادة إنسان ذبل كمداً كوردة سفتها الرياح.

- My Lord! the people are like a tossed ship which, without a rudder, is driven by the winds in all directions!

In a tone of awful menace he said:

- I'll take the wind out of their sails!

Assailed once again by misgivings and doubts and failed by her patience at that moment she said:

- We shall be well-advised to resort to wisdom, voluntarily beating a temporary retreat. The day of victory is drawing near.

He looked at her in astonishment and said:

- Are you recommending submission, Rhodopis?

Hurt by his tone, she hugged him and, with scolding tears flowing down from her eyes, she said:

- He who prepares for the big assault does well to retreat a few feet. Victory depends on the final thrust.

The King sighed and said:

- Oh, Rhadopis! If you pretend not to know my soul, who else will? If I submit in spite of myself to the will of any man, I shall wilt away in sorrow like a rose withered by the wind!

One can always, I am sure, defend this language as an attempt at a poetic style, though Mahfouz did not attempt to write poetry but simply good prose. The fact is that the idiom of classical Arabic forced him to 'sound' poetic, as the distinction between 'literary' and 'poetic' styles had not as yet been established, and the poetic devices we today recognize as such were at the time simply idiomatic in the classical language and a sign of 'elevated' style in verse and prose alike. It is unthinkable that anyone should write a dramatic dialogue like this *whether in verse or prose*, today, thanks ironically, to the efforts later made by Mahfouz himself (together with others of course) to rid the literary language of such *standard* rhetorical devices. Other 'ideas' of *literariness* came into being and with them, different criteria

of judging a work of art. Periphrases is today scoffed at and only a handful of writers actually resort to florid circumlocution. And as the idiom changed, the early works that relied for literariness on this brand of rhetoric ceased to be regaded as 'living' literature but have been increasingly dealt with as period pieces. It is partly on account of this that Mahfouz's early works are often dismissed as juvenilia.

(ii)

Sometime in the mid-forties, perhaps as a result of his coming into contact with writers of the modern novel in Europe, Mahfouz abandoned the historical novel and, with it, for ever, the old rhetoric. Since the publication of *Al-Qahirah Al-Jadidah* (The New Cairo) in 1945 masterpieces have flowed from his pen that transformed the Arabic novel. For almost thirty years, he wrote novels in the new language of fiction characterized by the following: accurate description, alive to such 'significant' details as may contribute to a particular state of mind or a general mood; 'smooth' narration, uninterrupted and unencumbered by figures of speech (dead or alive) or other rhetorical embellishments; and, most importantly, 'nimble' dialogue that echoes the Egyptian dialect and is often a literal rendering of it. Sixteen novels and seven collections of short stories were produced in that period (1945-1974) before another change occurred marking yet another stage in his development beginning with *Al-Karnak* (1974) and continuing in the same vein of *experimentation* till today.

In all three areas – description, narration and dialogue, – Naguib Mahfouz adapted rather than fought back the old idiom. The impressionistic terms I have used in referring to his innovations in each area now need substantiation. Let us take our random examples

from a novel that left an indelible impression on our generation, namely *Zuqaq Al-Midaq* (Al-Midaq Alley). I have had a chance to refer to its adaptation to the stage in my Introduction to Sa'd El-Din Wahba's *Mosquito Bridge* (State Publishing House, Cairo, 1987, pp. 12-13) referring, in passing, to the great stir it made when produced in the mid-fifties on the Egyptian stage. It was made into a film too, and the novel itself has been reprinted a dozen times. Let us take, as I said, a random passage from the latter part of the novel where Ibrahim Farag introduces Hamidah for the first time to *eau de cologne*, with an old version of the 'atomizer':

> وذهب إلى التواليت فأتى بزجاجة زرقاء كروية يتصل بفم معدنى فيها انبوبة من المطاط الاحمر، وسدد فوهتها نحو وجهها، وجعل يضغط على الأنبوبة فيمج فى صفحة وجهها سائلا زكى الشذا، وقد ارتعشت فى بادئ الأمر شاهقة ثم استنامت إلى طيبها فى دهشة وارتياح. وألبسها الروب بنفسه وجاءها بشبشبه فانتعلته ثم تأبط ذراعها ومضى بها إلى الحجرة الاخرى، ثم إلى الردهة الخارجية، وسارا معا متجهين صوب أول باب إلى اليمين.
>
> (ص ٢٢٥ - ٢٢٦)
>
> He went to the dressing-table and picked up a round blue bottle with a metal spout to which a red rubber tube was attached. Pointing its end at her, he pressed the rubber tube hard to sprinkle a sweet-smelling liquid on her face. She initially trembled and gasped but soon, amazed and delighted, surrendered to the fragrance. He helped her to put on a dressing gown and gave her his slippers which she put on too. Arm in arm, he took her to the next room, thence to the outer hall and, together, they walked towards the first door on the right.
>
> (pp. 225-6)

As the transition from one part of the scene is done concurrently with the action, the language of description becomes almost indistinguishable from that of narration. Naguib Mahfouz was conscious, I suspect, of the solutions he now offered to some of the problems of writing about modern life in classical Arabic, some of which, no doubt, made modern standard Arabic possible. He does not shy away from words which are peculiar to the Egyptian dialect, such as التواليت (El-Toilet), الروب (El-Robe) and الشبشب (El-Shebsheb) – the first two borrowed from French, the last coined from an Arabic word (shabba) in accordance with a generative principle widely applied.(1) At the same time he prefers to maintain the classical level if the words available are adequate, however little used, such as يمج (spray); زكى الشذا (of sweet fragrance); استنامت (surrendered, acquiesced); انتعلته (put on shoes or slippers) and تأبط (put under one's arm). Meanwhile he accepts those words recently coined as translations of foreign words approved by the Arabic Language Academy for lack of equivalents in ancient Arabic such as انبوبة (tube) and مطاط (rubber). Semantically he uses classical words in their modern sense, so that الردهة is used to mean a hall while in ancient Arabic it had meant heath-top or a rock hill. Nor does he insist on the distinction in Arabic between حجرة (a ground floor room) and غرفة (an upper floor room), using the former in place of the latter.

Syntactically, Mahfouz seems to depart but little from Archaic Arabic; but he does attempt one or two innovations. He relies in connecting his sentences on what appear to be, or what are (as

(1) The rule in classical Arabic is to generate a new word by repeating the first consonant after the second in a 3-letter root word, if the last two consonants are similar. Thus Qazza (root Qazaza) gives birth to qazqaza; Habba (hababa) to habhaba; balla (balala) to balbala and so on. قزّ ← قزقز، هبّ ← هبهب، بل ← بلبل الخ.

formally defined in classical grammar) 'coordinating conjunctions', but the pattern of using them makes the effect closer to 'bondage' than to 'linkage',[1] so that the reader is tempted to change the apparent structure into the 'real' or the significant one. Look at the opening sentence, apparently consisting as it does of two main clauses connected with a conjunction (ف), with the second sentence having a relative clause beginning with a verb يتصل as is common in classical Arabic, though the classicists would prefer ذات فم معدني يتصل to يتصل فم معدني فيها and that is perhaps why I have rendered it 'with a metal spout' rather than 'wherein was a metal spout'. Now the conjunction ف could in Arabic suggest either a simple 'and' implying a subsequent action (he went and he fetched) or an article expressing 'purpose' (he went to fetch). The latter is obviously what is meant here, so that the rendering could be: "He went to the dressing-table to fetch.." or "Reaching the dressing-table he took...' or simply : 'From the dressing table he fetched..'. Indeed, the pattern of conjunctions in the whole passage suggests more 'subordination' than 'coordination' so that the structure is closer to the European system of dependent and independent clauses than to the classical Arabic one of equally significant series of independent sentences. Note the following sequence of conjunctions:

(و → ف) (و+و → ف) (و → ثم) (و+و+ ثم → و+ ثم) (و)

where the second, fifth, seventh, eleventh and twelfth suggest the subordination[2].

(1) F.C. Scott, *English Grammar*, Heineman, London, 1976.

(2) It is possible, of course, to suggest alternative patterns of subordination.

It may be hard to claim such a suggestion of 'subordination' is totally unknown in classical Arabic or that Mahfouz was the first to attempt it; but the fact that he now made it a regular 'mode' of narrative style, established it as a linguistic feature of the new Arabic. By simply varying his conjunctions Mahfouz could control his tone and shift the semantic focus as he pleased, solely through syntax. Other 'solutions' need not be dwelt upon, though important, such as the use of the adverbial structure 'preposition + noun' instead of the old 'adverb' الحال. In one sentence the latter is used شاهقة (gaspingly) then the former فى دهشة وارتياح (in amazement and with delight). Was Mahfouz flying a kite?

Just as description is closely interwoven here with narration, a common enough feature of the modern novel, the narrative stream in Mahfouz is never interrupted to allow for his typical analysis of his characters' states of mind. What is more important for our purposes is that at this stage in his development Mahfouz discovers the power of the vernacular, a power which he gives to his dialogue by making it echo – closely and literally – the Egyptian dialect. Part 18 of the same novel deals with a domestic scene when Umm Hamida (Hamida's mother) breaks the news to her of a new unexpected suitor. I would have liked to quote the opening paragraphs in full but they are too long:

ومضت أم حميدة مهرولة إلى شقتها، وفى هذا الشوط القصير ـ ما بين الوكالة والشقة ـ ثمل خيالها بأحلام عراض. وجدت حميدة واقفة وسط الحجرة تمشط شعرها، فتفحصتها بعينين ثاقبتين كأنما تراها لأول مرة، أو كأنها تعاين الأنثى التى خبلت رجلاً له وقار السيد سليم علوان وسنه وثروته. ووجدت المرأة عاطفة تشبه الحسد..

ثم قالت لها دون أن تحول عنها عينيها:

ـ مولودة فى ليلة القدر والحسين!

فأمسكت حميدة عن تمشيط شعرها الأسود اللامع وسألتها ضاحكة:

ـ لمه؟ ماذا وراءك؟ هل من جديد؟

فخلعت المرأة ملاءتها وطرحتها على الكنبة ثم قالت بهدوء وهى تتفرس وجهها لتمتحن أثر كلامها فيه:

ـ عروس جديد!

فلاح فى العينين السوداوين اهتمام ويقظة تخالطهما دهشة وتساءلت الفتاة:

ـ أتقولين حقا؟

ـ عروس كبير المقام يتمنع عن الأحلام يا بنت الكلب...

ـ من عساه يكون؟

ـ خمنى...

ـ من ...

ـ السيد سليم علوان على سن ورمح...

ـ سليم علوان صاحب الوكالة؟

ـ صاحب الوكالة وصاحب الأموال التى لا يفنيها المحيط!

ـ يا خبر أسود!

ـ يا خبر أبيض، يا خبر مثل اللبن والقشدة...

(ص ١٤٤ ـ ١٤٦).

Umm Hamida returned quickly to her flat. In the short distance from the *wikalah* (1) to the flat her imagination grew intoxicated with wild dreams. She found Hamida standing in the middle of the room combing her hair: she examined her with piercing eyes as though she saw her for the first time, or as though she looked at an unusual 'female' – the woman who drove insane a man as venerable, as old and as rich as Mr. Selim Olwan. Umm Hamida was rocked by a strange emotion akin to jealousy... Fixing her eyes on her daughter she said:

– By Al-Hussein! you must've been born in the Night of Power!(2)

(1) An old Cairene roofed wholesale market-place,with the owner acting as an agent for tradesmen, hence the literal meaning of the word – agency.

(2)The night in Ramadan when the first verses of the Quran were revealed. Prayers on that night are popularly believed to fulfil any wish.

Hamida stopped combing her glossy black hair and asked with a laugh:

– What for? What've you got? What's new?

The woman took off her *milayah* and flung it on the sofa. Quietly, with her eyes focused on Hamida's face to see the impact of her words, she said:

– A new suitor.

In the black eyes a glint of interest and eagerness shone, mixed with surprise, as the girl wondered:

– It isn't true!

– A suitor in a great position, not to come by in dreams, you, daughter of a bitch!...

– Who could it be?

– Make a guess?...

– Who?...

– Mr. Selim Olwan, the great man, himself!...

– Selim Olwan who owns the Wikalah?

– He owns the Wikalah and as much money as no ocean can have!

– My Goodness!

– Say what a lovely piece of news, as white as milk and cream!

I have omitted only four descriptive statements from the dialogue at the places indicated by dots, which are more like 'stage directions', so as to keep the flow of the exchanges uninterrupted. Needless to say, the dialogue takes us down to the world of reality by echoing the language used by such characters in daily life: and many sentences are simply lifted from Egyptian Arabic, though they can be read, with

inflexions, as classical. Mahfouz is doing here what Tewfiq El-Hakeem had done in picking up those Egyptian expressions which can if inflected be regarded as 'correct' – that is, according to the traditional grammar of classical Arabic – though he gets much 'lower' in his linguistic level than his great predecessor. Al-Hakeem would never say عـــلـــى ســـن ورمـــح -- a typical Egyptian expression implying distinction and power. It literally means "(raised high) on the tip of a spear", and, though it does not exist (as far as I know) in the idiom of classical Arabic, it must have had a classical origin. Nor would Al-Hakeem use the concluding interchanges of خبر اسود (black piece of news) and خـبـر ابيض (white piece of news) with the common Egyptian play on the colour with reference to milk and cream. Though both are naturally averse to swear words, the 'son of a bitch' occurs in both, though more boldly and frequently, in Mahfouz. Again in the rendering of the scene Mahfouz does not hesitate to use an Egyptian word of a Greek origin كنبـه (canapé) (cf. the etymology of our English canopy), or a word coined in Egypt and accepted by the Arabic language Academy (*mula'ah*) to mean a 'bed sheet', though the Egyptian version *milayah* refers to a square or a rectangular black cloth used by women in rural areas and in the poorer districts of the cities as an overdress – (they wrap themselves up in *milayahs* in fact). Nor does he hesitate to make use of the foreign expression '... eagerness mixed with surprise' in trying for a more accurate description of the 'glint' in the girl's eyes. *Al-Midaq Alley* was in more than one way an experiment in a new kind of language, and it was no coincidence that it was noticed by the redoubtable Taha Hussein himself, though the 'master' had one or two remarks to make about 'slight mistakes in Arabic made by the young writer'.

But *Al-Midaq Alley* was only the beginning. Further refinement of the narrative style came with that unparalleled masterpiece *Bedayah wa Nehayah* (A Beginning and an End) which showed him a master of 'atmosphere', in the creation of which he relied on his reader's knowledge of Egyptian Arabic and the Egyptian milieu. Thus reference is continually made to a particular environment already well known to the reader: and a single word picked up from it could bring to life a whole scene which, however, changed from one reader's imagination to another's according to their various experiences of that particular scene. Modern standard Arabic had already had the sanction of the traditionalists in post-war Cairo, for all their objections to the innovations, and Mahfouz advanced with sure-footed ease to deal with all the levels of human experience in a language unused by his ancestors. The serialization of his next work *Bayn Al-Qasrayn* in *Al-Risalah Al-Jadidah* brought him to the attention of the remotest village in Egypt, as school children could read that novel without having to contend with the linguistic difficulties encountered in their Arabic lessons: Mahfouz became a household name.

Development continued in the 1960s with a different novel, namely *The Thief and the Dogs* , where his experimentation with the stream-of-consciousness technique forced him to vary his language a little, as he discovered the rhetoric of 'internal time' and the importance of balancing his two time-scales – the internal against the external. He grew a little bolder in his use of 'current' written Arabic, attempting symbolism here and there but making use of the religious tradition in enhancing the suggestiveness of the thief's dialogue with the holy man. His preoccupation with the role of religion in our thinking today, negatively or positively, made him ponder the way our

very thinking in Arabic relies on the tradition of Islam and the concepts drawn from it. He wrote at the time an allegorical novel, *Awlad Haretna* (People of our Alley) translated in English as *Children of Gabalawi*, which was banned as soon as the similarities with the stories of revealed religions were spotted, and the ban was not lifted even after he had won the Nobel Prize in 1988. He prefers, however, to deal with this sensitive subject indirectly as he does in *The Road* and in the series of short stories which dominated the years 1963-1973. Though the language of the short story had been developed in many respects, and young writers now competed with Mahfouz for the laurels in this area, such as Yusuf Idris, to mention a more prominent name, further development was needed. When this came, it was not along the same lines (realism-naturalism) but in the direction of symbolism.

* * *

(iii)

There is no such a thing as a language of symbolism: only in poetry could we speak of a purely symbolic use of language – and very rarely so. Writing is a strange business and, being a writer myself, I was often puzzled by the accuracy which characterized Mahfouz's use of his symbolic language. A story like *Za'balawi* fascinated our generation by its multi-layered linguistic structure, something which Mahfouz achieved through a combination of allegorical action and the connotative power of words. The amazing thing is that Mahfouz maintains the precise meanings of words throughout, setting his action in the realistic framework now closely associated with his work, so that an unsuspecting reader could get only the general symbolic impression without reference to any specific symbolic or allegorical terms. His economy here is also unprecedented: even in recounting the dream of paradise, a few lines seem to do the trick because they are carefully calculated to create the ultimate impression of earthly bliss in religious terms. This is done, I am sure, deliberately, for in these ten lines we have the symbolism finely spun in individual threads before being interwoven into the general realistic fabric of the action. Considering the singificance of this feature of Mahfouz's art, I believe I must quote at least part of that paragraph.

> حلمت بأننى فى حديقة لا حدود لها، تنتشر في جنباتها الأشجار بوفرة سخية فلا ترى السماء إلا كالكواكب خلل أغصانها المتعانقة، ويكتنفها جو كالغروب أو كالغيم. وكنت مستلقيا فوق هضبة من الياسمين المتساقط كالرذاذ، ورشاش نافورة صاف ينهل على راسى وجبينى دون إنقطاع...

> I dreamt I was in a garden of unlimited vastness. There were trees on all sides, luxuriantly growing and so thick that only small patches of the sky appeared like stars through their intertwined branches. It was grey, as at sunset or as though it was an overcast day. I was reclining on a heap of jasmine petals that still fell like a drizzle around me, while a clear shower from a fountain came down incessantly upon my head and brow...

The contrast between this language and the rest of the story emphasizes the discrepancy between reality and illusion, if *Za'balawi* is to be interpreted in this way; but then the precision of the terms in which the dream is described shows that Mahfouz was not now a slave to the rhetoric of ancient Arabic, but that he could create his own rhetoric by using the same vocabulary though not the same idiom. It is thanks to this ability that Za'balawi, the mysterious character in the story, has been variously identifed as God, the devil, art, illusion or thought, in spite of the fact that Mahfouz keeps reminding us that he is simply a 'saint' or a holy man. Being able to blur the contours of his 'subject' deliberately, by using words with specific meaning and no ambiguous syntax, Mahfouz gives us a symbolic language hitherto unparalleled and unknown in Arabic.

In other short stories, the language of the press is boldly used, and modern standard Arabic finally comes into its own as a language of

literature. A story in the same collection دنيا الله (*The World of God*), is entitled "(committed) by a person or persons unknown", that is, "no criminal charge". Before moving on to show how in 1974, a new language was developed, here is a specimen of this bold style:

> واكد الطبيب ابن القتيل ان والده لا يملك شيئا ثمينا علي الاطلاق وان حسابه فى البنك لا يتجاوز المائة جنيه وفرها لحاجة طارئه ثم لخرجته اخر الامر... وجرى تحقيق دقيق مع البواب وأم أمينة لكنه لم يؤد إلى شيء فأفرج عنهما بلا ضمان. ووجد ضابط المباحث نفسه فى حيرة ضبابية وعانى إحساساً بالهزيمة لم يمر به من قبل...
>
> (ضد مجهول)
>
> The son of the victim, a physician, confirmed that his father owned nothing of value whatsoever, that his bank account didn't exceed a hundred pounds saved for an emergency and for his funeral in the end... The porter and Umm Amina were carefully interrogated but as nothing came of it, they were ultimately released without bail. The detective superintendent was now utterly bewildered, and suffered a feeling of defeat never before experienced...

Only too natural, no doubt you'll say, as these concepts *are* new to Arabic and they have to be expressed in this language; but then no one would have dared before Mahfouz to regard this subject – these ideas and these concepts – as fit for literature. The fact that he saw nothing in using the language of law (Gowers's 'legalese') in the context of a literary work shows, finally and decisively, that a new rhetoric was born.

Now in *Al-Karnak* (1974) Mahfouz does something else. He does away with the conjunctions commonly used, universally I should say, in Arabic. He uses short sentences linked together only by inner logic,

either of sequence or of causality, in the same way he uses short chapters each given the name of a character before bringing them all together as the threads of the plot are interwoven. To this method I can trace the later technique used in such a masterpiece as *The Day the Leader was Killed* (1985) – as well as later in *Talk of the Morning and the Evening* and *A Very Good Morning to You* which I have elsewhere described as akin to that of the 'plastic' arts. This may be identified as follows: the thought-processes of the character narrating each chapter are reflected in changing syntactical patterns; though Mahfouz manipulates the narrative stream to focus on 'patches of consciousness' of special significance to the novel as a whole. The shifting of these 'patches' is often done in an 'impressionistic' manner so as to produce a cumulative effect, regardless of the discursive content or the emotional substance of the experience. I have described this stage in the work of Naguib Mahfouz as 'experimental', but the mature works produced point unequivocally to success. The experiment began, I have said, with *Al-Karank* and, as I have often done in this essay, I shall take my example from the first page, the opening lines themselves:

اهتديت إلى مقهى الكرنك مصادفة. ذهبت يوماً إلى شارع المهدى لإصلاح ساعتى. تطلب الاصلاح بضع ساعات كان علّى أن أنتظرها. قررت مهادنة الوقت فى مشاهدة الساعات والحلى والتحف التى تعرضها الدكاكين على الصفين. عثرت على المقهى فى تنقلى فقصدته. ومنذ تلك الساعة صار مجلسى المفضل. رغم صغره وانزوائه فى شارع جانبى صار مجلسى المفضل.

I was guided to Al-Karnak café by chance. One day I went to Al-Mahdy street to have my watch mended. The mending required a few hours and I had to wait. I decided to beguile the time by looking at the watches, jewelry and bric-a-brac offered by the shops on either side. I found that

> café as I moved from one place to another and headed for it. It has been my favourite place ever since; though small, and tucked away in a sidestreet, it has become my favourite place.

The initial sentence, shorter than usual, has the deliberately paradoxical initial verb 'guided', which is connected in the Arabic heritage with finding one's way back to God, or, at least, with mending one's ways, but is used to indicate the opposite here. Mahfouz could have said 'discovered', 'came across' or simply 'found' (the first is closer to the meaning intended), but he gives us this emotionally-charged word on purpose in a quick-moving sentence, almost like rifle bullets, only to qualify it in the subsequent sentences by providing a context which naturally leads to a different verb at the beginning of the fifth sentence. But the choice of the idea of 'guidance' is hardly haphazard: it is first echoed in the name of the street 'Al-Mahdy' which means the 'guided' and, in our tradition, 'a holy man who guides the multitude'. Then the echoes proliferate: the 'mending' of the watch is a play on the mending of one's ways whilst, at the same time, suggesting a play on the word 'watch' which is the same in Arabic for 'hour'. The theme of putting right a time that is 'out of joint' is therefore suggested deliberately to suggest the opposite. But the idea of guidance recurs in the word 'mending' in the third sentence, a word which, in Arabic, clearly suggests the idea of 'piety' or 'benignity' or 'good work' (الإصـــلاح → الصـــلاح) then the theme of charming the time (literally 'observing a truce with time' recurs in the fourth sentence to further confirm the paradox as he would have peace with time by watching timepieces. That he would be going back in time is now fully suggested, albeit obliquely, but the

word-play elsewhere, a reversed feature of the 'grand style' (cf. C. Ricks's *Milton's Grand Style*) is quite common as a means of enhancing the 'suggestiveness' of the language (of verse and prose alike). The fifth sentence begins, I have said, with a different verb 'found' but, more importantly, it ensures that the protagonist came upon that cafe in the context of movement in place, so that for a moment at least we feel that a movement back in time could be done only when spatial movement is arrested. Hence the insistence in the following sentences, the sixth and the seventh, that it is now his favourite 'place of rest'. We almost come full circle now to the original 'guided': for in a very peculiar sense the protagonist seems 'destined' (guided by destiny) to land on that 'spot of time', secluded and 'tucked away' from the general stream of life outside. The rest of the paragraph clinches the point:

> الحق انني ترددت قليلا بادىء الامر امام مدخله، حتى لمحت فوق كرسى الإدارة امرأة. امراة دانية الشيخوخة ولكنها محافظة علي أثر جمال مندثر. حركت قسماتها الدقيقة الواضحة جذور ذاكرتى فتفجرت ينابيع الذكريات. سمعت عزفا وطبلا، شممت بخورا. رايت جسدا يتموج. راقصة. نجمة عماد الدين. الراقصة قرنفلة. حلم الأربعينات الوردى قرنفلة.

> The fact is that I hesitated a little, at first, at the entrance, until I spotted a woman sitting at the manager's desk, a woman approaching old age but with traces of her fading beauty preserved. Her well-defined and clear-cut features stirred the depths of my memory so that images of the past gushed forth. I heard music, I smelt incense, I saw a body swaying – a dancer: the star of Imad el-Din street, Qurunfulah the dancer, the rosy dream of the forties, Qurunfulah.

The apparently regular syntax of the opening sentence almost reflects the hesitation, with the three consecutive prepositional phrases interrupting the flow of the idea even while reinforcing it. But the 'figure at the centre' turns in the latter part of the sentence into a 'time figure' as the contrast between her approaching old age and her youthful beauty *as preserved more in the mind of the protagonist than in her features* causes the past to come alive again. And it comes alive in the deliberately symmetrical 'I heard..., I smelt..., I saw...' (echoing 'I came, I saw, I conquered'). These are, however, followed by a flurry of nominal structures which, being in apposition to the 'swaying body' quickly build up into the image of Qurunfulah (literally, the carnation) retrieved from the depth of subjective time.

The trick used here is almost purely syntactical as the nominal structures are designed to suspend all action, and with it time, so as to focus the reader's attention on the image from the past now being looked at outside time. It is through the alternation of verbal and nominal structures, carefully balanced at first but now flowing into each other, that the writer's intended effect is achieved.

* * *

(iv)

More than a decade later, *The Day the Leader was Killed* further developed this new use of language. I have made a bold statement, above, regarding the 'impressionism' of this later style which now needs illustration: the basic qualities of the language have been tentatively defined, and the changing syntactic patterns have been said to reflect "patches of consciousness" akin to the patches of colour on a canvas where the contours are deliberately blurred. In this novel Mahfouz attempts a further innovation: he uses the present tense to relate past events so as to create a sense of immediacy, but the 'conflict' of tenses helps not the immediacy but the blurring of contours. The passage which, I believe, illustrates this best occurs at the end of chapter IV where Mohtashemi Zayed concludes a stream-of-consciousness account of the morning scene at home, but I shall begin by giving the usual sample from the opening lines:

نوم قليل وفترة انتظار ثملة بالدفء تحت الغطاء الثقيل. النافذة تنضح بضياء خفيف ولكنه يتجلى بقوة فى ظلام الحجرة الدامس. اللهم إنى انام بأمرك واصحو بأمرك وإنك مالك كل شيء. ها هو أذان الفجر يفتتح يومى الجديد، ويسبح فى بحر الصمت الشامل هاتفا باسمك. اللهم عونك لهجر حنان الفراش والخروج إلى قسوة برد هذا الشتاء الطويل.

> A little sleep and warmth-drunk moments of waiting under the heavy cover. The window is suffused with a subtle light which still shines bright in the pitch darkness of the room. O Allah! I go to sleep at your command and wake up at your command: to you belongs all. That is now the call to the dawn-prayer opening my new day, with the words swimming in the all-embracing sea of silence, chanting your name. O Allah! help me to abandon the kindness of bed and venture forth in the cruel cold of this long winter.

The first sentence is, as is now common in Mahfouz, without a finite verb, with the opening words sufficiently ambiguous to create the mood needed. 'A little sleep', as transferred from the Egyptian dialect, means ' I sleep but little at night'; but in this context it is open to interpretation. Does it mean 'let me have a little sleep', or 'I have had a little sleep'? The meaning is not decided by the grammar because Mahfouz has given us a long subject without a predicate. The next words in the same sentence give a transferred epithet – a figure simply covered by traditional metaphor in classical Arabic but is quite new in our modern language. Of particular interest here is the use of ellipsis, so characteristic of the ancient narrative yet so rare in modern Arabic; for only in the fifth sentence do we hear of 'bed', of the man about to leave it. Indeed, there is no indication whatsoever that the initial sentence refers to the speaker at all: and it is the lack of verbs (of any 'kind') rather than the absence of a pronoun indicating the speaker (for a 'speaker' must always be assumed) that ensures the ambiguity.

Now the use of the present tense throughout is meant to transform the action from a temporal to a spatial performance, that is, making it more akin to a painting than to a musical note. The second sentence gives us this impression at once: a painting almost in the *Chiaroscuro* tradition where light and shade play against each other. A crucial word in the first sentence, 'waiting', which confirms the ambiguity (in so far as an old man of over eighty, as we soon find out, can be waiting for nothing too important, if not for death) suspends our sense of time to allow for the spatial dimensions of the scene to emerge. To this end, the time sequence of the 'morning scene' is quietly reversed for, as every Muslim knows, the call for the dawn prayer is made a long time before any light can 'suffuse' the Eastern sky, not to say the bedroom window. By implying, therefore, that the 'subtle light' in the window is that of the new day, the writer is 'blurring' the time contours of the scene so as to stress its spatial character; and by punctuating the sequence with the doxology and the invocation to Allah, he succeeds in making the scene reflect a state of mind rather than objective reality. As such the light in the window and the all-embracing sea of silence outside wherein the words of the *muezzin* swim will be representative of psychological rather than objective facts.

Another linguistic trick is the substitution of weak-mood verbs for the expected verbs in the indicatve mood. Instead of telling us that he left the kind bed and ventured forth into the cruel cold, the protagonist says a short prayer, invoking God's help to do so. We soon find out that he did so when in the next sentences we know that he is now groping in the dark, then performing the 'rites of ablution' preparatory to performing the dawn prayers. Again these two actions are not expressed in the indicative mood, the second being an

exclamation "how cold this ablution water is", the first being in the imperative, "Let me grope my way in the dark!".

Let us now look at the passage which occurs at the end of chapter IV which I have said best illustrates the new techniques of Mahfouz. I shall give it, a whole paragraph, with a modicum of comment, as I believe it speaks for itself:

وتعود الوحدة. أتمشى فى الشقة بعد تعذر المشى فى الشارع. القران والأغانى. طوبى لكم يا من أخترعتم الراديو والتليفزيون. بامية ومكرونة على الغداء. حبب الله إلىّ العبادة وجعل قرة عينى فى الطعام. اى وحدة والكون من حولى مكتظ بملايين من الأرواح؟ أحب الحياة وارحب بالموت فى حينه. كم من تلميذ قديم لى صار اليوم وزيراً. لا رهبانية فى الإسلام. ما مثلى ومثل الدنيا إلا كراكب سار فى يوم صائف فاستظل تحت شجرة ساعة من نهار ثم راح وتركها. كثيرا ما أحادث حفيدى عن الماضى لعله من حيرته يخرج. أغريه بالقراءة وقليلا ما يقرأ. ويستمع إلىّ بدهشة من يعز التصديق عليه. دعنا من علياء سميح ومحمود المحروقى. الم تحملك الأحداث على الايمان بالوطن والديمقراطية؟ وما معنى الإصرار على التمسك ببطل منهزم راحل؟! كيلا تصبح الدنيا فراغا يا جدى. إنى ألفت نظرك إلى أشياء فى غاية الجمال. يضحك ويقول لى:

ـ ما أريد الآن إلا شقة ومهرا مناسبا!

كيف أستطيع تجنب هموم الدنيا ومعى حفيدى المحبوب؟ ما أجمل كرامات الأولياء!.

(ص ٢٢)

Loneliness returns. I walk about in the flat now that I can no longer walk in the street. Qur'an (chanting) and songs. Blessed ye be who invented radio and television. Okra and macaroni for lunch. Allah made me love worship and made eating a great pleasure for me. What loneliness (could I speak of) when the universe about me is crowded with millions of souls? I love life and welcome a timely death. Many an old student of mine is now a govenment minister. There is no monastic unworldliness in Islam. I traverse the world like a

> mounted traveller on a (hot) summer day who, having spent an hour in the (cool) shade of a tree departs and leaves it (all) behind. I often talk to my beloved grandson about the past, to help him out of his perplexity. I trempt him to read but he reads very little and listens in amazement to me as though he finds it hard to believe me. Let's forget about Alia' Samih and Mahmoud Al-Mahrouqi; haven't (recent) events nourished your faith in the homeland and in democracy? Is there any sense in clinging to (the image of) a departed, defeated hero? Well, grandfather, I must; otherwise the world will turn into a void. But I draw your attention to exceedingly beautiful things. He laughs and says to me:
>
> - All I want now is a flat and a reasonable dowry to pay!
>
> How can I avoid the worries of this world when this beloved grandson (lives) with me? Oh, what wonderful miracles saints perform!

Apart from the obvious stream-of-consciousness technique, and the sustained use of the present tense which ensures the 'spatial' rendering of the action, Mahfouz maintains the 'tone' of the old man's thought-processes by drawing on the rich imagery of classical Arabic as it lives in our religious tradition. The wording and the structure of key sentences are redolent of the tones of ancient sermons and religious musings while others are directly taken from the Egyptian vernacular. And the mixing is done so masterfully as to appear almost

natural to the modern reader – as natural, in fact, as the coupling of 'Quran and songs' in the third sentence, and the anticlimactic "Blessed ye.. radio and TV"! The vernacular tone is to be heard in fact as early as the second sentence when (اتمشى) 'I walk about' is used in the common Egyptian sense of having a walk, a stroll – to saunter rather than to head for a place deliberately – while 'to walk' in the same sentence has the double senses of 'it is impossible *for me* on account of my old age to walk in the street' and 'it is difficult for people to walk in the street because of over-crowdedness'. The latter sense is not far-fetched, though I have opted for the first in the translation; for soon the over-crowdedness is plainly stated and made to contrast with his loneliness. And just as the ideas of okra and macaroni come naturally to his mind, the latter an Italian word, the former apparently Indian, the typically classical قرة عيني (the coolness of my eye, or it cools my eye, which is more or less equivalent to 'warms the cockles of my heart') is used in the next sentence (with a reference to a famous tradition by the Prophet. Examples of such a mixing can be multiplied without difficulty.

A final word is necessary, however, on the effective use of ellipsis. A perfectly acceptable principle of Arabic style (in fact a distinguishing quality), ellipsis is to be found at its best in the Quran. It is used here, however, as a means of establishing the abrupt transitions between one thought and the next. The bracketed words in my translation represent omissions which are natural enough to supply in any translation (I would've added many more) but they still restrict the meaning of the elliptical structures. Take the third sentence: "Quran (chanting) and songs" – two items of 'sound' that both radio and television broadcast, and may be broadcasting now on different

channels. He obviously sees no contradiction between worship and enjoying the pleasures of this world as exemplified in singing and eating. The ellipsis here functions therefore as a device of creating an ambiguity which is, however, soon dispelled. Throughout it helps to establish contrast between seemingly opposite ideas but which, on a closer examination, will be found to be hardly contradictory at all. The recurrent references, for instance, to religion in the first part of the paragraph disappear in the second when his relationship with his grandson and their conversation are recalled; but the idea surfaces once more at the very end.

* * *

THE PAST AS FUTURE

NOTES ON
THE CHANGING IMAGE OF EGYPT
In Modern Arabic- Egyptian Literature

That the movement of time may be felt to be more cyclical than linear is hardly new: it is a common enough concept which can be traced in world literature down the centuries, in most genres and most languages. That this view of time can blur the image of a country to the extent of obliterating its very identity (as in the case of Egypt) seems to me, however, to be unprecedented in world literature. Indeed, there has been a tendency in recent years to view the future in terms of the past which has resulted, owing to Egypt's unique position as an Arabic-speaking country, in portraying Egyptian present and future in terms of Arabian rather than Egyptian past. My contention is that this tendency is responsible for the distortion of the image of Egypt which had been recovered and maintained throughout the literary output of Egyptian writers and poets from the late nineteenth century up to the mid-1970s. These notes aim at throwing light on the recovery and loss of that image in the Arabic literature written in Egypt over the last hundred years.

(i)

My first intimation of that tendency dates as far back as the early 1950s when, as a budding dramatist drawn to the history of my nation, I noticed that the historical incidents recommended to me by my teachers as fit for dramatic treatment in Arabic took place not in Egypt but in Iraq and the Levant. The main traits of the characters often referred to by the critics as most suited to dramatic handling somehow appeared alien to me: I could not identify easily with them and felt distanced from them not simply by the realities of daily life in Cairo but more importantly by the temperament of the quintessentially Egyptian environment of my native Rosetta (*Rasheed*) where I had spent my childhood and the best part of my boyhood. As I have mentioned in my 'autobiographical note', (the 'Introduction' to the English translation of my *The Prisoner and the Jailer*, State Publishing House, 1989) I found it easier to imitate Shakespeare than to imitate ancient Arabic writers. The difficulty was not linguistic, for I had started as an Arabist, learning the Quran by heart together with thousands of lines of ancient Arabic verse which I thoroughly enjoyed. My *Little Anthony* was a failure, of course, but so was my *Joseph and his Brothers* and, by the late 1950s, I came to realize that Arabian history, as recorded in the overcrowded library of my father, was not my history: it was the history of another place – not of Egypt, at any rate.

That feeling was crystallized one day in 1955 when, invited to take part in a play-writing competition, I picked up a theme from Arabian history concerning the killing of a notable Muslim commander by a Caliph. The theme attracted me because of the dramatic irony involved, for that commander had fought for the establishment of the new State with that Caliph at its head. The scene of the murder would be highly dramatic, I thought, because that commander was a personal friend of the Caliph and his right-hand man. But the blatant ingratitude of the Caliph preyed on my young sensitivity and I could not accept his strange behaviour as even fit for condemnation: it was too cold-blooded and almost criminal. The fact that he did it to protect the young State from a potential menace, a man who had 'grown too big for his boots', did not justify the murder; and as I could not sympathize with his 'reasons', I felt I could not arouse any sympathy for him in my audience. The play would be an account of a murder, of a crime, not a tragedy as I understood it to be. It took me some time to realize that my lack of sympathy was due, at the deepest level of my consciousness, to my failure to identify with the *historical moment:* the Abbasid Dynasty which ruled the newly-established State did not belong to my history; it was not relevant to my, or to my audiences' life in Egypt; and the whole thing appeared unreal. I abandoned the project and withdrew from the competition.

That Arabian past could be confused with Egyptian past was common enough in those days. Indeed, the concept of the past sometimes included events which never occurred in Egypt, with Islam as a unifying *political* bond. It was as though the history of Germany was regarded as part of the history of England on account of their common religion. What concerned me most was the tendency to

regard that 'past' as an essential part of our consciousness, even of our very mental constitution. As late as 1982, when I came to do Izz El-Din Ismail's *Trial of an Unknown Man* into English, while teaching at a 'sister' Arab university, I dealt in my *Introduction* to the play with that idea, rather briefly:

> The action (I wrote) moves forward, therefore, not into the future but into the past as though the past was an extension of the present – an idea which Ismail presents with great subtlety. For him the past is not a memory; it is certainly not the familiar romantic past of Arabic literature. It is a reality which we never question as it has become somehow part of our mental constitution. The modern Arab man looks forward not to the future, but to the past as an image, or a group of images and concepts, to be lived and relived perpetually whatever their intrinsic value, and whatever their relevance to the present.
>
> (p. 9).

As I worked at the time on a Radio programme on 'Arabic Classics', which enabled me to re-read the major texts of antiquity, my consciousness of the past heightened and I came to realize that it was being revived in the daily way of life and as a set of values *yet to be reached*, that is, as future. The paradox was glaring: for the appearance of the 'modern' Arab city where I worked was comparable to European cities, while the predominant ideas of the people pointed not to modernity but to antiquity. Men drove sumptuous cars but looked up to the life of their ascetic forefathers as ideal; they spoke their local version of Arabic but regarded the ancient language of their

ancestors as the ultimate in linguistic perfection; and even while attempting 'modern' literary genres, such as the short story and a certain variety of free verse, they regarded the literary models of ancient Arabia as paragons of excellence and beauty. The torrents of words pouring forth in every direction chanted the glory of the past and encouraged the young especially to 'look back in reverence': every poem, story or article painted a picture of a bright future in terms of the past.

The amazing thing was that, although I resented that tendency perhaps because I was officially regarded as an alien (I was in fact alien to their past, present and future) the whole thing seemed natural enough. The Arabs of Arabia were trying to establish and defend their identity which they felt was being threatened by the advance of civilization or, to use a cliche, by the march of history. It was natural, perhaps imperative, for an Arab with a cultural identity so distinct to try to maintain it by seekig his roots and his very self in the past: it was hardly his fault that the elements or the constituent parts of that identity were scattered over centuries of checkered Arab history and had to be put together again, consciously and deliberately, whenever a threat was posed to it. It was equally natural that his literature should reflect that effort: for the revival of ancient literary forms and ancient literary themes meant the revival of a coherent identity which had once existed and whose values had been vindicated more than once, militarily, politically and culturally.

It was not, in fact, until I returned to Cairo in 1984 that the situation appeared anomalous. The literature written in Egypt was beginning to follow the same line, as though sharing the same language meant

sharing the same history and cultural identity. Writers in Egypt were persistently dealing with Arabian history as though it actually belonged to them: whatever the literary form, Egyptian writers were being forced to revive the past, to explore and re-interpret a history not theirs *and to identify with it.* I have underscored the last phrase because it lies, I believe, at the basis of the current dilemma, and the blurring of the image of Egypt in contemporary Arabic literature.

(ii)

The image of Egypt as a country with an independent, however composite, cultural identity was born in the nineteenth century though, as a concept, it cannot be said to have been significantly reflected in the poetry and prose written in Egypt until the first world war. An early exception is a long poem in the tradition of ancient Arabic poetry entitled 'Major Events in the Nile Valley' which appeared in 1894, and in which Ahmad Shawqi, later crowned as the Prince of Poets, that is, the greatest poet alive as well as Poet Laureate, reminds his readers that Egypt has a long glorious history as the land of the Pharaohs. Ironically, as is common in the history of Arabic literature, Shawqi was only half-Arab, with a Turkish mother and a father of Kurdish extraction. It was yet too early for poets like Hafez Ibrahim (who died in the same year as Shawqi, in 1932) to write a poem like 'Egypt Talks about Herself' where the identity of Pharaonic Egypt is stressed as different, more glorious and older than either that of ancient Greece or ancient Arabia. Both poets were, however, too immersed in the tradition of ancient Arabic poetry to sound genuinely concerned about Egypt's cultural independence: they were at best precursors of sentiments which developed much later.

In fact, from approximately the time of the last Umayyad Dynasty, when the earliest extant specimens of Arabic verse written in Egypt were produced, through the Abbasid, Fatimid, Ayyoubi, Mameluki and Ottoman rule, almost every poem betrayed a consciousness of belonging in a vaster entity – the Islamic world, albeit politically divided and reduced to statelets, often chaotic or at war with each other. Dr. Mohamed Kamel Hussein has shown in his extensive studies of Egyptian literature that for nearly twelve centuries our poetry echoed the ideas and aped the forms of Arabic literature written elsewhere in the Islamic world, where Arabic was the dominant language, of course, and reflected an aspiration to emulate the early models produced in pre-Islamic and Islamic times now regarded as models of excellence. The Arabs who moved to the newly conquered country were not apparently bothered about its cultural identity. The image of Egypt in the poetry of an early visitor, the redoubtable Al-Mutanabbi, was that of a rich vineyard being exploited by the wily 'foxes' of the land while the rulers were shorn of their power and reduced to harmless 'scarecrows':

The scarecrows of Egypt
Wake not to the foxes:
For these are cloyed
And the grapes are endless!

The image maintained in the verse written about Egypt down the centuries was simply that painted by Amr Ibn Al-'Aas, who had led the invading Arab armies, in his famous letter to Caliph Omar immeditely after the conquest, namely that of a paradise on earth. Perhaps a few excerpts will clinch the point:

> I have received the letter in which the Prince of the Faithful, may Allah grant him long life, enquires about Egypt. Know, O Prince of the Faithful, that Egypt is a dusty village, and a green tree – one month's journey long, and ten (days') journey wide. It is surrounded by dusty mountains, and dusty sands amidst which runs the Nile in blessed journeys morning and evening, now waning, now full, in phases like the Moon and the Sun. At an appointed time each year it floods its banks.... when a people of an ignoble religion, and bound to us by a covenant of protection, start to till the land and sow the seeds,.... When the plants grow and harvest time approaches, they drink the dew of heaven and feed on the earth beneath. O Prince of the Faithful, Egypt is now a white pearl, now black amber, now a green emerald, now a checked silken fabric! May the name of Allah, the creator, be exalted!

I have taken these excerpts from a massive book written in the fifteenth century by Ibn Taghri Bardi, entitled *The Shining Stars: A Guide to the Kings of Misr and Al-Qahirah* and published in the 1960s in twelve volumes. The names of *Misr* and *Al-Qahirah* in the original are maintained because they refer, in fact, to two cities rather than to Egypt and its capital. '*Misr*' which in the Quran and elsewhere refers to Egypt here refers to the old city south of Cairo established by Amr Ibn Al-'Aas, and commonly referred to nowadys as *Misr Al-Qadimah*,

that is, old Cairo. The significance of this is obvious, for the author, very much in the tradition of his ancestors, almost disregards the political entity of Egypt as a State but considers it merely as a realm added to the only imaginable political entity – the Islamic state. The word 'kings' in the title is also used in the orignal sense of 'owners' with decidedly economic, rather than political, implications. No wonder, the conquered land was to the Arabs what it had been to the Romans and the Greeks before them – a granary, a source of immeasurable material wealth and an earthly paradise. It is no coincidence that a Quranic reference to Egypt is made in the same terms as those used for Paradise – "And Pharaoh proclaimed among his people: O my people! Is not Egypt my kingdom, with these rivers flowing under me?" (*Ornaments*, 51) which echoes more than forty verses describing the 'Gardens of Eden' with 'the rivers flowing under them'. Egypt could not be seen to have had a cultural identity distinguishable from those of other conquered lands, as the people who worked the land had an 'ignoble religion', which was eventually replaced by Islam, the 'natural religion of the desert' as Nicholson has described it and as Ahmad Amin was later to argue. Nowhere in the poetry of the Islamic period in Egypt, say, right up to the breakup of the Ottoman empire in 1914, could we find an image of Egypt as a country with a long tradition, an independent civilization and a cultural identity of its own, as Taha Hussein was later to show.

Ibn Taghri Bardi is not alone, of course, in devoting so much space in his book to the description of Egypt and the Nile. I have examined the lists prepared by Dr. Ne'emat Ahmed Fouad on the subject, the title of her doctoral thesis being *The Nile in Arabic Literature*, and

have found the evidence overwhelming. Egypt was a 'land', referred to as a country, never as a State in the modern sense of the term.

Ibn Battouta, the original tripper and author of the famous *Travels*, (to pick an example from the fourteenth century) could not suppress his amazement on first looking at the city of Misr and quotes two poets on the subject. Ibn Juzayy says that Egypt is worthy of the following notable lines of verse:

By your life! Egypt is not Egypt!
It's Paradise on earth, if thou seest;
Its boys are the eternally young boys of Eden,
Each woman a lovely maiden
With the charming eyes of heaven!
Its gardens are paradise,
Its Nile the river of paradise!

A few paragraphs later, having commented on the beauty of the land of Egypt, Ibn Battouta quotes another poet – Nasser El-Din Ibn Nahed–on the specific charms of Egypt:

The banks of Egypt's Nile are paradise,
There's no country like it!
Adorned is it with its regularly flowing Nile,
The winds above are kept at bay
By rich shielding foliage,
With the trees ever-chirping
David's Psalms!
Its air is fluid, naked, quivering,
And the ships here sailing

> Like the orbs of heaven
> Now coming, now going!

Still in the Mameluki period, though now in the fifteenth century, a most influential writer and compiler of literary works, Al-Ibshihi, argues that verse 21 of surat (chapter) *Al-Zumar* (The Troops) of the glorious Quran refers simply to the water coming down from heaven to flow in the form of rivers on earth. He has the following reverent words to say about this:

> "The blessed Nile" is the longest river... This has been established by the author of The Delights of Thought and the Roads of Learning. The cause of its annual flood is variously interpreted. The prophet's tradition refers to it as one of the rivers of paradise. The learned men of yore have established that all rivers of Paradise share a common source–a dome in the land of gold.

Around the time of the Ottoman conquest of Egypt, in the early sixteenth century, Ibn Iyas Al-Hanafi wrote his beautiful 'History' entitled *Lovely Flowers Culled from the Events of Past Times*. He begins his description of Egypt by quoting travellers:

> "It has been reported (he writes) that a traveller could ride from Alexandria to Aswan with no need for personal provisions: indeed, he would be riding in the shade, under fruit-bearing trees, up to the city of Aswan,

> passing through villages alive with people: he need not carry any food or water."

He then quotes some of the authorities. Al-Mas'udi says, he tells us, in *Muruj El-Dhahab* (*The Golden Meadows*) that "Each village in Egypt can be regarded as a city all by itself".

Al-Quda'i says (he tells us):

> There has never been a greater kingdom on Earth than Egypt. If a wall were to be erected between Egypt and the rest of the world, its people would find adequate compensation within. If its land were to be cultivated in its entirety, it would accrue enough to support the whole world.

He further quotes Ka'b Al-Ahbar, the great Muslim scholar and exegesist as saying: "he who would like to see the similitude of the island of Paradise, let him look at the land of Egypt". Two other poets are quoted on the subject: Ibn Al-Wardi says:

> The land of Egypt is the world,
> Its people are the only real people
> So, kiss it on arrival!

And Salah Al-Safadi says:

> He who has seen the world,
> Has been to every country
> And has seen all people,
> Of all kinds and all races
> But has not seen Egypt or the Egyptians
> Has never seen the world,
> Nor the world of men.

(iii)

The discovery of modern Egypt was made paradoxically, through the rediscovery of ancient Egypt. Egyptologists from Champollion to Erdman in the nineteenth century made Egyptians only too conscious of the significance of their past, and the subsequent discovery of Tut-Ankh-Amen's tomb, with the unprecedented interest in Egyptian civilization helped to create a climate in which Taha Hussein's call 'Egypt for the Egyptians' came to assume new meanings and to dictate a new course of thinking. Though Dr. Muhammad Hussein Haykal's *Zeinab* was published anonymously, he signed the introduction as 'an Egyptian and a peasant'. Tewfik El-Hakeem's *The Return of the Spirit* makes use of the ancient Pharaonic myth concerning the return of the 'ba' (soul) to the person (the 'ka' or the force of life) in after life, in portraying the revival of modern Egypt in cultural terms. The Egyptians, Al-Hakeem tells us, were now rediscovering themselves as the heirs to an ancient glory which may have been suppressed down the centuries but which could never die out: it lay dormant in the recesses of men's minds and souls and could be recognized only in times of anguish: only trials and tribulations could reveal the essential solidity and briliance of the Egyptian character.

Egyptian literature, from *Zeinab* onwards, came to reveal, unobtrusively, a sense of a different past in the thinking of every individual. The revolt by the leading thinkers of the time against the British occupation was primarily, of course, political, but it was also an expression of their newly discovered cultural belonging. Rather than the old traditional sentiments of the poetry of the thirteen

centuries since the advent of Arab rule we now have a persistent soul-searching and varied forms of self–questioning. 'Are we Arabs or Egyptians or a mixture of both?' was a question that often cropped up in the works of creative writers: Al-Mazini faces the question directly in his *Ibrahim the Writer*, an autobiography in the European tradition and with many European affiliations. Lutfi El-Sayed translates Aristotle and claims many affinities between the Greek philosopher's *Politics* and the Egyptian tradition, not the Islamic system of government, if ever there was such a thing. Ahmad Amin sets out to examine, from a completely different point of view, the entire stretch of Islamic history, producing a masterpiece of research unequalled in any language – not even in Sha'ban's *Islamic History: A Re-interpretation*. His *The Dawn of Islam, The Heyday of Islam* and subsequent books are written from a completely new point of view: for Amin established his camera in Egypt and looked east at Arabia, then west at North Africa, varying his angle of vision to take in sights of the practice of Islam all over the Muslim world, all the while making the reader conscious of his belonging in a different culture – the Egyptian. Taha Hussein was, of course, more explicit when he made the bold claim that Egyptian culture was more Mediterranean than Arab, and that the future of Egyptian culture lay across the Mediterranean rather than the Red Sea.

With the end of the Second World War, the efforts of the pioneers came to fruition, with the image of modern Egypt emerging not as an extension of the life of the desert but as an independent country divided unequally between rural and urban communities, between the life of the 'haves' and the 'have-nots', and, last but not least, between the quintessentially Pharaonic traits in the Egyptian character, perhaps

geographically determined as Gamal Hamdan has convincingly shown in his monumental *Character of Egypt: a Study in the Genius of Place*, and the generally Islamic practices most apparent in forms of worship and social modalities. Post-war literature reflects images of a young Egypt whose ancestors are buried in the Pyramids: It was not difficult for Naguib Mahfouz to transform his early Pharaonic settings and characters into modern Egyptian ones in his later novels; nor was it hard for Abdul-Saboor to see himself as Osiris pacing the solitudes in upper Egypt. Yusuf Edris found it only too natural, as Tewfik El-Hakeem had done, to recreate Pharaonic roots in his images of both village and city; and so did most of the writers of genius who peopled the literary world in the early 1950s.

The emphasis was now on our difference from the Arabs rather than on our common language, religion or history. In novel after novel of the *Golden Book* series published by *Rose-El-Youssef*, Egyptian men and women are treated realistically, with their belonging in Egypt heavily underscored. A few specimen should adequately illustrate my point: Mahfouz's *Khan El-Khalili, Zuqaq El-Midaq, A Beginning and an End* and the Trilogy *(Bein AL-Qasrin, Qasr El-Shouk, Al-Sukkariyyah)* represent the life of modern Egyptians fighting against external forces, with each caught up in the conflict between the 'traditions' imposed on them in the name of Islam by a succession of foreign rulers and the urge to achieve liberation at more than one level – political, social, and cultural. Varieties of this conflict are to be found in Yusuf Idris, Abdul-Rahman Al-Sharqawi, Amin Yusuf Ghorab, Abdul-Hamid Gouda El-Sahar, Muhammed Abdul-Halim Abdullah, Mahmoud Kamel, Yusuf El-Siba'i, and Ihsan Abdul-Quddus. Writers of less renown and of less artistic talent still

exhibit that conflict: the liberation struggle, that is, the political fight for driving the British out of Egypt, was increasingly making the Egyptians conscious of their identity – an amalgam of Pharaonic and Islamic traits fused in the heat of a modernist passion, a yearning for the transformation of traditional modes of life in Egypt into modern ones inspired by Europe. Islam was gradually being regarded as a religion, perhaps as it should be, and as such was not allowed to influence the endeavour for independence, for modernization, for general advancement. Most importantly, a clear separation was taking place between the religion of Islam, as adopted and adapted to Egyptian life, and the progress towards a modern, rational and egalitarian society. No sense of belonging in Arabia or in Arab tradition could be detected in the literature of the period. The New Verse, often referred to as 'free verse', was in a very important sense inspired by the same liberation struggle – the revolt against the traditions of Arabia and what those traditions stood for. Salah Abdul-Saboor's first volume of verse, *People in my Country*, was an assertion of a new identity, a new sense of belonging – and it had to break away from the stilted forms of Arabic poetry, even from the fine verse produced by the revivalists and innovators of the 1930s and 1940s. Higazi's first volume of verse is equally significant: *A City without a Heart* was a protest against the alienation of the individual in the city, as well as an affirmation of the existence of a city and of village life away from that city where indigenous values could still be traced and which simply collapsed in city life. Both in theme and form Higazi's book was revolutionary, perhaps as much as Abdul-Saboor's, and they both had Egypt as their frame of reference – not ancient Arabia.

In the theatre the story was hardly different. The early 'plays of ideas' written by Tewfik Al-Hakeem gave place to plays about modern Egypt: the new trend meant portraying contemporary characters chosen from the real life of ordinary people, with the accent on 'typical' Egyptian characters, that is, on the types that are most representative of Egyptian life, both in the rural areas and the city, and on the actual language spoken by them. Philosophical questions such as those handled in *The Cave-Dwellers* and *Prasca: The Problem of Government,* continued to preoccupy Tewfik El-Hakeem, of course, but contemporary life in Egypt soon gave birth to dozens of one-act and full-length plays. In his *Theatre of Society* and *Varied Theatrical Pieces* he shows, well before the 1950s when the theatre flourished in Cairo, that the image of Egypt as a country with a well-defined identity had already been established. Though rarely recognizing their debt to Tewfik Al-Hakeem, the first generation of Egyptian playwrights – Sa'd El-Din Wahba, Yusuf Idris, Lutfi El-Kholi, Rashad Rushdi, Mikhail Rouman, Nu'man Ashour, Alfred Farag and Mahmoud Diab – owed their concept of Egypt, that is, the idea of a country with a character adequately differentiated from other Arab countries by its long history before the Arab conquest and the specific and distinctive qualities of its people, to the work of the pioneers from Abdul-Rahman El-Rafi'i to Tewfik El-Hakeem. Throughout the sixties the drama of these writers, as well as that of the second generation – Samir Sarhan, Muhammed Enani, Yusri El-Guindi, Abul-Ela El-Salamouni, Fawzi Fahmi and Abdul-Aziz Hammouda, simply confirmed that image.

It was, in effect, an anomaly peculiar to the Egyptian scene. For Nasser's vehement argument in favour of 'Arab nationalism', that is, a

return to that vague, never-realized concept of a unified Arab world, did not impress the writers sufficiently to make them reflect it in any of their work. It was an 'ideological' question, an 'idea' used for political purposes but never made part of people's thinking and feeling. The Egyptians felt they had good, perhaps loyal, friends in the Arab world; the Arabs were even regarded as brothers and sisters; but the awareness that they were different from the Egyptians never diminished. Not even during the heady days of unity with Syria did the feeling that non-Egyptians were non-Egyptians disappear. Indeed, it may be truer to say that close contacts with the Syrians heightened the Egyptian consciousness of difference, especially as the political turmoil that followed the break-up of the United Arab Republic, and the lengthy wrangling with Iraq and open confrontation with Jordan and Saudi Arabia, encouraged the critics of Pan-Arabism to make the opposite claim for a Pharaonic Egypt, as opposed to an Arab Egypt, and to advocate the withdrawal from the intricate web of Arab politics.

(iv)

Pan-Arabism soon gave place to a strange and a most unexpected development: from 1967 onwards, the literature written in Egypt reflected not a sense of loss, not a self-questioning, but a discovery of an Islamic past so glorious as to call for a complete re-consideration of our position. The seeds of Islamic fundamentalism had already been sown when writers as varied as Mustafa Mahmoud, a hitherto agnostic writer (if not an outright atheist) and Abdul-Rahman Al-Sharqawi, an avowed 'socialist', as well as a host of many other writers, started to

'go back', in search of 'genuine' sources of inspiration. Salah Abdul-Saboor's unique volume of verse *Meditations on a Wounded Time* reflects the indignation of a whole generation at the military defeat in 1967 in terms of images from the past. The characters of a paper-tiger king, a court jester and a professional bard reflect his condemnation of the political system: but the characters are drawn from Islamic history – a trend soon reinforced by the work of every poet of the second generation of Modernist poets: Fathi Said, Farooq Shooshah, Ibrahim Abu Sinnah, Farooq Guwaida, etc. In 1969, Abdul-Saboor published some of his best verse plays; one was set in modern Cairo, with characters drawn from everyday life in imitation of T.S.Eliot and with the language deliberately manipulated to reflect the 'realities' of 'post-defeat' Cairo, but the others had their settings in ancient history, with characters like the 'king', the 'Princess' etc casting giant shadows over the plays. Abdul-Saboor's attitude implied, I have said, his condemnation of 'our' tradition, mainly perhaps because of his realization that it was not really 'ours' at all. The characters of Ajeeb Ibn Al-Khaseeb is a parody on the type of Arab king that our world had known for centuries; Bishr Ibn Al-Hafy is another important type – a 'mystic' who withdraws from public life, leaving the country to be devoured by the voracious 'kings' and princes. As *The Tragedy of Al-Hallaj* has convincingly shown, mysticism was the only avenue open to the helpless, an escape route to the undiscovered world of God. The end is simply inevitable: for Al-Hallaj's attempt to be 'positive' spells disaster for him and his followers. Abdul-Saboor's preoccupation with the problem of having anachronistic rulers, miraculously dug up from the pages of 'our' obscure history, produced another significant play where an official

inexplicably grows in stature to become a tyrant who ruthlessly kills an ordinary man. *Night Traveller* is described as a black comedy by the author, and is commonly believed to belong to the 'Theatre of the Absurd'; but if there is any 'absurdity' in it, it is the current political situation as projected onto the action of the play. In his brief comment on the play Abdul-Saboor states that the 'absurdities' of our time must be viewed in their proper contexts, namely as 'obscene survivals of a past not ours'.

Abdul-Saboor's use of themes from Arab and Islamic past is unique: his message is determined by his tone which was sometimes misinterpreted, especially when the plays were put on the stage. His tongue-in-cheek utterances and references to mysticism, especially in the dialogue of Al-Hallaj, are meant to pillory the new mystics in Egypt who were either escapists or advocates of obscurantism, but Muhammad El-Sab', the actor, delivered them as though spoken in earnest, thus playing havoc with the 'tone' of the play! Abdul-Saboor had thought that everybody believed that the past was really and truly past and that it was worthy of the deepest contempt, on account of its flagrant atrocities. He expected his audience, therefore, to grasp his ironic tone; but he was wrong. He planned to arouse people's condemnation of the present social and political structures by dealing with them in terms of the past, that is, as anachronistic and 'obscene' survivals, but the desired result was not always achieved. The 'wind of change' may be to blame, of course, but Abdul-Saboor's attitude itself could not be said to have been absolutely well-defined. True, the bloated tyrants and court jesters are resuscitated (in their modern counterparts of rulers, ministers and pressmen) to be scoffed at, but

the language used is classical Arabic and is steeped in the ancient idiom. His voice was one of protest, but it battled against the very language used – as a critical book he later issued shows.

A New Reading of our Ancient Poetry is more a defence of Abdul-Saboor's own position than a work of criticism, or of scholarship, pure and simple. In it he makes the strange claim that the typical Arab poet was not really serious when he lavished praise on a Caliph, but rather, to judge by his hyperbolic utterances, sarcastic. He labours the point sometimes, carrying his argument to an extreme, and demanding too much – simply too much – of the reader. But the book is a testimony of rejection: Abdul-Saboor could never be reconciled to the fact that those poets – members of his own tribe – could sink so low and actually condone everything their rulers did, as well as those blatant injustices with which our history abounds. He was apparently warning his generation not to take on trust everything bequeathed by their ancestors but to embark on a re-examination of their literary history. I suspect that, having absorbed the Arabic tradition so thoroughly, he felt he had to be proud of his forefathers, but, living in an age of enlightenment, he was actually ashamed of what they did. The ambivalence in Abdul-Saboor's attitude has so far gone unnoticed: it was, at a certain level, more of a dilemma than an ambivalence; but the tenor of his work is decidedly on the side of condemnation.

(v)

Now the literature of the 1970s and 1980s presents a different picture, as the second generation of novelists, poets and dramatists

had different things to worry about: life in Egypt was changing, boldly and clamorously. Sadat's encouragement of the Muslim fundamentalist movement, already active since 1967, was tantamount to a green light to a new way of thinking. People started to look back in pride at the glorious achievements of the Arabs, confusing Arab with Islamic history, and regarding the eminent Muslim non-Arab pioneers – in science, philosophy and other disciplines – as Arabs, with the result that Arab history was whitewashed overnight and bright images appeared from nowhere to dazzle the young. The media became full of resonant speeches excavated from the quarries of ancient Arabic and given the sanction of Islam to pass for ideal literary works. The tradition became an obsession; everywhere you went the magic word was spoken as though carrying the authority of God himself; and ancient books were 'rediscovered' and published regardless of their intrinsic worth. What Islam as a religion had to do with literary production and literary excellence was to many a mystery: for the tradition was both pre-Islamic and Islamic, and was contributed to by Muslims and non-Muslims, even well after the spread of Islam: Christian poets and writers fill the pages of Arabic literature, from Al-Akhtal, the Umayyad poet who was always near to the throne, to Jibran Khalil Jibran (though often writing in English) Elia Abu Madi, Bishara El-Khuri, Mikhail Ne'imah, Khalil Mutran and Khalil Hawi of our time. It is in fact interesting that religion as such bothered our forefathers much less when it came to the writing of verse or prose than political considerations or the literary product: going through some of the best known works of antiquity, you'll be surprised to come across a remark thrown in parenthetically, as though of no great consequence, about the religion of the writer. Remarks like

'and he was Jewish', 'for he was Zoroastrian', or 'because he was an atheist' pepper the largest collections of verse and prose preserved in our tradition. In fact, apart from the Quran itself, and perhaps some of the poet's tradition, very little will be found to link Islam, as a religion, to the literary tradition.

But the tradition came to have a very specific meaning in the work of the new novelists, namely the legacy of the Mameluki and Ottoman period. Gamal El-Ghitani felt he had struck gold when he discovered he could employ 'themes' – scenes and characters – belonging to that stretch of history, rich in significance for our present. In more than one novel, in fact, Ghitani uses to advantage his knowledge of that period, and the result is a fine collage, enlivened with his superb story-telling power. But lesser writers could not do the same and the result has been often sad. The purely historical novel or play was now well behind us – such works as *'O, my Islam'* by Ali Ahmad Bakatheer, or *Armanusa, the Egyptian* by George Zaydan – and a new type had established itself, namely that which 'employs', that is, makes use of history in interpreting or re-interpreting the present. This phenomenon has been most apparent in the theatre where every dramatist writing today tried his hand at least once at this new kind of historical play – Samir Sarhan's *Sitt El-Mulk* (done into English as *The Lady on the Throne,* Cairo, State Publishing House, 1989) Fawzi Fahmi's *The Sultan's Game* (Cairo, SPH, 1982) M. Enani's *The Crows* (Cairo, SPH, 1987) Farooq Guwaida's *The Fall of Cordova*, (Cairo, 1988), M. Salmawi's *Salome*,Abul-Ela Salamouni's *A Man in the Citadel*, Abdul-Aziz Hammouda's *El-Zahir Baybars*, and Youssri El-Guindi's *Abu-Zayd El-Hilali* and *O Antar!* are but notable examples (all put on the stage in the 1980s). In each a new

interpretation of a historical incident is sought with a view to throwing light on the present – and the history revisited is sometimes Egyptian, remote or recent, as in Sarhan, Enani, Salamouni and Hammouda, sometimes non-Egyptian, as in Guwaida, Salmawi, Fahmi and El-Guindi. Even when Egyptian, the historical period dealt with forced each writer to submit to the concept of Egypt at the time – as part of the Mameluki or Ottoman empire. The use of history cannot be attributed, as claimed by some critics, to these writers' classical aspirations – for none of these follows the strict rules of classical drama and some are avowedly *avant garde*: nor can it be regarded as a device for escaping censorship, that is, for saying what you want about the government without being banned or black-listed: for many plays are allowed which are openly critical of the government; and a recent 'historical' play has been banned because of its indirect criticism of the Egyptian-Israeli peace accord. My contention is that it was the tradition, as elevated to such an eminence by the current climate of opinion, that drove these writers to it.*

The point I am making is that, under the influence of the advocates of Arab or Islamic tradition, the image of Egypt in serious drama, in the novel and in poetry is being again blurred. Belonging in the tradition has entailed a new context for Egyptian literature, and a new context for Egypt – not the one advocated by Taha Hussein across the

* The tendency has not died out: two further 'historical' plays by Guwaida (*Blood Stains on the Ka'ba's Curtain* and *The Khediv*) and another by Enani (*A spy in the Sultan's Palace*) have been put on the stage in the last few years, with a reasonable amount of success (Enani's in 1992 and Guwaida's *Khediv* in 1994). A second part of *Salome* has been written by Salmawi, though not yet staged. The latest play dealing with the concept of Arab history in Egypt has been published this year (1994) under the title *The Dervish and the Dancer*. Here the author, Enani, explicitly condemns the common concept of the 'tradition' and the aspiration to revive Arab history.

Mediterranean – but the old one defended down the centuries since the Arab conquest, across the Red Sea and Sinai. Some characters in those plays are Egyptian, with their language clearly distinguishable as such, but the main characters in all dramatists are non-Egyptian.

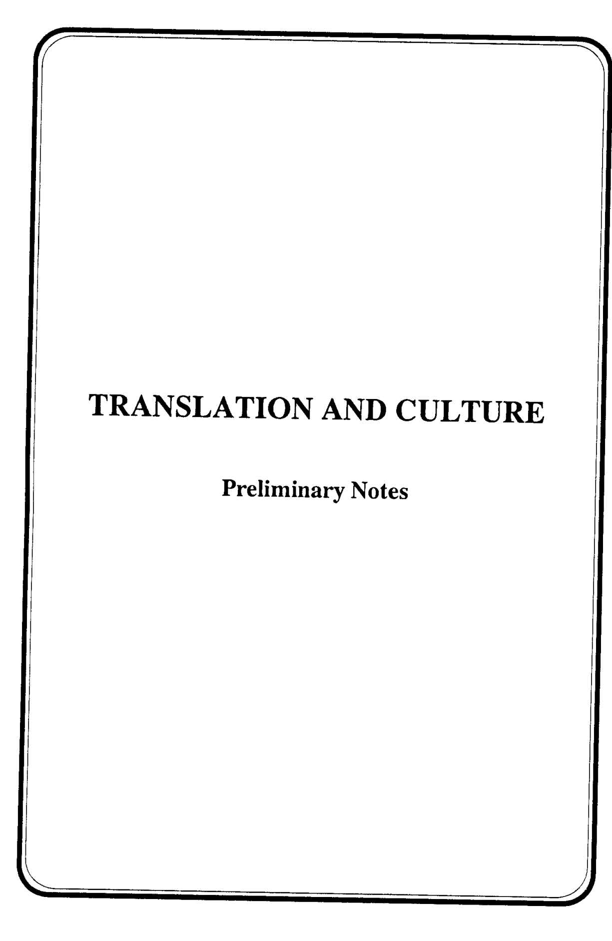
Gradually, the image of Egypt is changing: the poets who have rebelled against the 'tradition'are increasingly regarded as 'apostates', and some are even ostracised, while others of very meagre talents and extremely limited abilities are coming to the fore with their traditional doggerel now regularly published in the Cairene dailies. The change in form has been naturally accompanied by a change in subject-matter and outlook: poems on the birthday of the Prophet, the Prophet's flight to Medina, the main Muslim holidays, and, of course, on national occasions (from the National Day to the victory of a soccer team) are inevitable. Other 'forms' of literature have appeared – if we expand our definition a little to include the 'article' and the T.V. script – which insist that the Arab past is ours too, that it is to the past that we should turn for salvation. You now hear, day and night, of strange characters with strange names – Khuzaymah, Ikrimah, Huzayfah etc – and read about them: some are dug up from pre-Islamic times, some from the so-called 'unknown pages of the history of Islam', but are all Arabians, dressed in Arab dress and claimed to be our forefathers. Books are being published on the soul's torment in the grave, with varieties of narrative techniques and quaint verse on each of the stages of a man's journey in the other world. The literary genesis of the typical book on the subject may be traced to the Greek concept of the underworld, a Hades or an Erebus, and the conversations conducted between the varieties of sinners or good souls are distinctly

reminiscent of the Orpheus myth in its various versions. There is only one difference, however, namely that the reader is required to accept the itinerary in the underworld after death as real; and he normally accepts the fictional narratives as truthful because they are supported by 'sayings' attributed, falsely in most cases, to the Prophet's companions and their followers, and occasionally to the Prophet himself.

On television the characters in Arabian dress, who speak an ancient variety of Arabic, cannot be identified as Egyptian or, by any stretch of the imagination, accepted as such. But they have come to constitute idealized images of man, and their speech and behaviour are presented as an ultimate in perfection. Muslim clergymen appear to admonish the listeners, using the same language and soporific statements on the pleasures of paradise and the glories awaiting those who listen and obey. The lore of television is a new variety of literary output which we receive, believers and unbelievers alike, and often have to put up with. It is important for our purposes because of its vast influence, and because it mixes fact with fiction, all the while distorting the image of Egypt, often obliterating it. The soap operas presented on the two national channels are still in the realistic tradition of the theatre in the 1960s, but they are pale imitations of daily life with their message too faint to compete with the so-called religious programmes. Their authors are strictly hack script-writers with modest talents, if at all: they present a reality that is resented, and hated, and which constitutes a poor alternative to the glory of the past.

The change over the last fifteen years or so has been remarkable: pictures of the future are dim and dismal unless brightened by the

past; and the present does not seem to have any independent existence unless linked, however laboriously, to the past. The novels, plays and poems with which I have been recently inundated, both as a critic and as a publisher, reflect the bewilderment of writers who are decidedly on the horns of a dilemma: should they recreate the past as a refuge, an ultimate refuge from an unpalatable present, or accept bleak reality as an inevitable future? In other words, should they identify with a past in which they feel they could not belong or train themselves to live with the absurdities of a present which they cannot change? They suffer, and with them suffers the image of Egypt which their fathers had painstakingly re-established.



TRANSLATION AND CULTURE

Preliminary Notes

Asked to write an article on the problems of translation of poetry for an international conference, I decided to make the task of my fellow translators easier by making it available in both Arabic and English. I proceeded to write what I thought would be the original text that would subsequently be done into the other language, and naturally I opted for Arabic. The text, covering all the points I wanted to raise, sounded idiomatic enough: it was characterised by the regular, slow rhythm of our ancient language with a tendency to pleonasam, platitudes and plenty of repetitions. When I set about doing it in English the ideas didn't seem to change at all; they were still as fresh and, I thought, interesting. However, what came out was something completely different. I didn't understand what happened at the time and I put it down simply to the change of audience. It was natural, I thought, to write different things to different people: and the question seemed adequately settled. However, with the virtue of hindsight, it can be explained in cultural terms, even though the translation of poetry seems less open to cultural influence than, say, idiom. What puzzled me, primarily, was that the ideas hadn't changed much: they were substantially the same in both versions, with the inevitable variations required by the change of audience, but the 'message' of the new text was different.

This was the start for a serious and maintained consideration of the role of translation in adjusting the 'message' of each text, and

consequently of the cultural role played by language and linguistic change (as best exemplified in the translation of literary and other texts). Apart from platitudes which are inevitable in such a context as this, there will be points of interest to the practising translator as well as to the theoretician, that is to say, the academic linguist whose main concern is with the theory (the principles and the roles) rather than the actual process of transformation and its cultural significance.

Well, the inevitable platitudes first. A translator is a cultural medium: no translator can hope to evade the cultural implications of his translated text: consider the simple rendering of '*can I help you*'? into اى خدمة or تحت امرك or, in different contexts and with different intonations:

1- عينّى؟ 2- خير؟ 3- فيه حاجة؟ 4- انت بتعمل ايه هنا

The translator here is both an *interpreter*, inasmuch as he seeks to get the real meaning of the English question, and an *author* of an Arabic situation which makes the choice of the Arabic phrase inevitable. The translator here not only undertakes a linguistic act but, as all students of pragmatics will tell you, a cultural act. And he performs at both levels at once, sometimes unconsciously, though he has to spend some time over the situation before actually coming to a conclusion about its real meaning. The act of grasping the meaning we often describe as the deciphering of the code or the *decoding*; and he uses the equivalent, or what he takes to be the equivalent code which had already been encoded by his society and his linguistic tradition.

That each code is inextricably embedded in a peculiar culture and indicative of it is commonplace: no one will quarrel with the suggestion that Arabic, of each variety, is closely linked up with the

Arabic environments everywhere, or that the rhyming slang in English (frog and toad: the road: aunt Nelly; belly; twist and twirl: girl; apples and pears: stairs etc..) springs from and indicates a specific culture; but it is the transformation of these and similar 'codes' into others that requires a deeper reflection. Would (هزَّ يا وزّ) be equivalent in our slang to 'twist and twirl'? It would not, because the message will be different, insofar as the Arabic will refer not simply to a girl but to a particular kind of girl, and, apart from the fact that the expression is peculiarly Egyptian and thus belongs to the same variety of language, it will not be available (to use Mackin and McCaig's definition of idiom) to *all* Egyptians. The first commonplace statement has thus led to a problem area connected with *audience*.

The second commonplace will similarly lead to a problem inasmuch as it is connected with the practice of translation everywhere. Even a beginner will tell you that you cannot stick to the structure of the source language when you do it into Arabic or English. It is a rule common to all translation work and will be found in every book on translation. However, while the call for transformation is not peculiar to Arabic, the mechanics of the transformation are. Such mechanics will depend on the variety of Arabic used – archaic, modern, standard or Egyptian (though Dr. Badawi has distinguished 3 varieties of the latter which he calls "levels"). This is problem area number 2, and as such merits a separate discussion inasmuch as it relates to the cultural matrix of each variety or "level".

The difficulty with the third commonplace is that it may not appear to be commonplace at all: indeed, a few Arabists will be loth to admit

to think that words are symbols with permanent, fixed meanings; otherwise, they will argue, how can we hope to understand our long and rich tradition? The facts, however, point in the other direction: many words which have survived in contemporary Arabic from the archaic variety of our language have undergone a considerable semantic change. A translator who is unaware of this will run the risk of misunderstanding a modern text containing words from the ancient language *whose meaning has changed.* In these cases the dictionary helps but little because even the best will only enumerate the various meanings, while old dictionaries will naturally give you only old meanings. If, on the other hand, the translator is only conversant with the modern meanings of the text he is doing into English, some of the words used by the writer in their ancient sense will baffle him.

The problem arising from such a 'commonplace' can prove insuperable for the beginner, as it may lead to serious misunderstandings and cultural distortions. Key words of our time, to use Professor Raymond William's identification of words like 'freedom', 'politics', 'democracy' and the like, suffer the most in this process of semantic change because they are most intimately embedded in the culture of a given society. 'Freedom' (الحرية) meant to the ancient Arabs the opposite of 'slavery' (العبودية); and a man or a woman can be either a slave, (whether by birth or if captured in battle) or free. Embedded in our ancient culture are expressions connected with this concept which are impossible to translate – here are a few:

١ - العبد يقرع بالعصا، والحر تكفيه الإشارة.

٢ - تجوع الحرة ولا تأكل بثدييها.

٣ ـ لا تشتر العبد إلا والعصا معه، إن العبيد لأنجاس مناكيد.

٤ ـ ومن نكد الدنيا على الحر ان يرى، عدواً له مامن صداقته بد.

The first example, a line of verse, means roughly that a free man is intelligent enough to take a hint whilst a slave must take explicit orders even if it means striking him with a stick. The second is proverbial for dignified life and is attributed by one or two authorities to the Prophet. It means roughly that a free woman would rather go hungry than earn her living as a wet nurse. The third and fourth are famous lines by Al-Mutanabbi, the first a strident attack on a ruler of Egypt who would not give him rich awards for his panegyrics and translates roughly as follows: "When you buy a slave remember to buy a stick as well, for slaves are unclean and abominable". The second says: "It much grieves a free man's heart to have an enemy who must be befriended".

With this background in mind the translator is bound to present the wrong 'message' to the modern European reader whenever he refers to freedom. One of the early translators who ventured boldly into this sensitive area of our tradition is Refa'a Al-Tahtawi who would not translate the French 'libert é' as حرية but rather as انصاف that is, 'fairness'. He may not have hit the nail on the head but he certainly exhibited adequate consciousness of the problem. The Arabic word did change its meaning and finally came to be equated with freedom; but the old meaning persists, and no translator will be able to escape the original implications when he takes on a line by Hafiz Ibrahim who makes Egypt say:


إننى حرة كسرت قيودى   رغم رقب العدا وقطعت قدى

" I am a free woman! I have broken my shackles, in spite of the oppression of my enemies, and have torn up my tether".

Or the lines by Ibrahim Nagui:

أعطني حريتي أطلق يديا	إنني أعطيت ما استبقيت شيا
آه من قيدك أدمى معصمي	لم أبقيه وما أبقى عليا

"Give me my freedom! Set my hands free! I have given all, keeping nothing back! Your manacles have caused my wrists to bleed; why should I keep them when they have caused me to wilt away?"

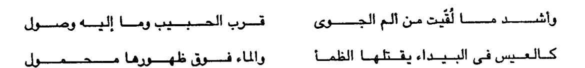
The use is metaphoric, of course, but the choice of 'vehicle' here makes the 'tenor' especially significant, which explains why when Um Kolthoom included the two lines in one of her songs in the mid-1960s the critics and foreign correspondents were quick to observe political undertones in the words and suspected the leading Arab singer of speaking for Egypt that suffered under the yoke of military rule even though the song was professedly a love-poem written years before the military came to power.

This takes us to the next word that has undergone basic semantic change, viz. *politics* – and associated words. The modern Arabic equivalent السياسة does not share the Greek root meaning 'city' (*Polis*) or 'social life', but rather refers to controlling or taking care of a flock of sheep or a herd of cattle. The Arabic verb يسوس means to drive the animals this way or that, and the noun السائس refers to the man who does the driving or who cares for his herd. The original meaning survives, incidentally, in contemporary Arabic and is used primarily

for the groom at the stables, and the meaning has been transferred to the garage attendant. A politician is therefore a shepherd or herdsman, not openly in a religous sense, though the origin of the association is there and has to be noted. The 'subjects' are called, not insignificantly, الرعية; and I may as well refer in passing to الرعاع a word directly derived from it. For the rise of the modern state in Arabia came with the unifying power of Islam and the religious leader was himself a political leader. It was natural to pick a word from the immediate milieu to designate this double function: *As-Siyasah* did very well because it meant something to the immediate audience and the implications needed. A ruler was the man who established the *rules* or, as the Arabic word الحاكم suggests, who pronounced judgment on all matters of state. Translating *Politics* into *Siyasah*, Ahmad Lotfy Al-Sayyed was fully aware of the difference and apologized in a footnote for the inaccurate rendering. The fact is that the modern meaning of the Greek-derived word has been given totally to its recent Arabic equivalent while the *practice of politics* in the Arab world remains entirely bound up with the ancient word. And this applies too to words like *Ameer* which does not translate accurately as 'Prince' but rather as *Commander* (consider امير الجيوش بدر الجمالى) from the Arabic *Amr* (to command); and عاهل a variant of عائل (supporter), often substituted for *monarch*, and, of course, *king* which has given us مـــلـــك, rather inaccurately insofar as *Malik* is the same as *Maalik* – owner, proprietor, lord.

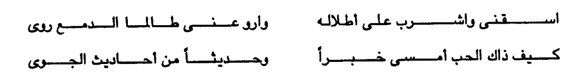
I have chosen some of the more obvious, because painful, examples of semantic change. A translator doesn't 'take thought' today before using these and similar words which have changed with the cultural transformations in the Arab World; but rather accepts the political

jargon and aims at the conformity of the terminology used. The cultural matrix of most words survives, however, in what we often refer to as the tradition, that is, the literary legacy of the Arabs. Most metaphors used in love-poetry use the common symbols of the Arabian desert – primarily thirst – which have lost their original meaning and now simply refer to love and associated emotions. Al-Tha'alibi lists in *Fiqh Al-Lugha* (Understanding [our] Language) words now used to indicate 'longing' or 'passionate desire' as *stages* in what he terms the 'need for water'. They include الهيام and الجوى -- two words which seem to have lost their original implication of thirst. Compare the following lines which use الجوى both in the original and metaphoric senses:



The greatest pain of longing (thirst) I have suffered
Is for the beloved to be close but yet unattainable,
Like camels in the desert, nearly dying of thirst
Even while carrying water on their backs.

and



O let me drink, and join me in drinking
To the memory (the ruins) of my love,
And report (to the world) for as long as my tears flow,

(To report/ to quench my thirst?)
How that love of mine is reduced to a"report"
A (mere) story of love (of thirst?)

The word-play in يروى may not be intended, but even the most ardent objectors to Ricks' inclusion of 'pun' in the qualities of the grand style will be hard put to it to deny its existence or that it does 'enhance the suggestiveness' of the lines. Any translation of the line may sound too long, too tentative; but what can we do when faced with such semantic change wherein the original sense is loth to disappear?

Other examples of semantic change are less problematic. *Qonbulah* قنبلة today does mean a bomb, and, though we know, or can guess, how it came to mean that (at the turn of the 19th century Al-Jabarti used قنبرة *Qunburah*- plural: *Qonbor* قنبر in referring to bombs) the fact remains that the present word did mean something to our forefathers – a group of horses or camels! *Radhah* ردهة meant a mountain summit, not a hall; *Ghaniyah* غانية a beautiful woman, not a woman of easy virtue; *Qa'eedah* قعيدة a woman, simply, not a cripple; *Kharqa* خرقاء simply a girl unskilled in household chores, not a simpleton; *Far'* فرع hair, hence فرعاء and فارعة – with long hair; and *Ahbal* واهبل he who lost his father or mother, hence the loss of the mind and, through metathesis, *Ablah* ابله to cite only a handful. But consider the following line of verse in which a poet noted for his 'simple' language describes a kiss:

ولثمت فاها ممسكاً بقرونها،   شُرب النزيف ببرد ماء الحشرج!

I kissed her mouth, holding her locks on both sides of her head, and drank deeply as a *thirsty* man drinks from the cool water of a (mountain pellucid) *pond!*

I have dwelt on this 'commonplace' perhaps for too long, because, as I have suggested, many Arabists will question the validity of my argument; and because of its connection with my last point which is not, decidedly, a commonplace, – namely, that the main area of cultural encounter is idiom.

At the outset one is met with the difficulty of establishing what constitutes idiom. We often say that this is an idiomatic expression when it is common enough or available to the native speaker, regardless of its illogical or ungrammatical structure. Categories of idiom are not mutually exclusive but can be established all the same both according to intrinsic features and to function. The common phrase, fixed or unfixed, can be regarded as idiomatic if typical, as I said, of the native speaker: for *Good Morning* صباح الخير is idiomatic; for *Good Afternoon* عصر الخير or the even more ridiculous بعد ظهر الخير is not; for *Good Evening* there is مساء الخير, but for *Good Night* there is only تصبح على خير – which breaks the noun and genetive pattern that could not, as we have seen, stand the test of analogy. This first category is entirely *culturally biased*: 'How are you?, becomes إزيك in Egypt and Sudan (literally what are you like?) ايش لونك in the Gulf (literally what is your colour?) and كيفك elsewhere. Sometimes idioms in Arabic and English are deceptively similar, sometimes genuinely so: the Egyptian عامل ايه in closer to *How are you doing*? than to *How do you do*? which is almost the exact equivalent of the Egyptian اهلا وسهلا, or the Arabian مرحبا, or otherwise the neutral تشرفنا.

A pragmatic approach to this category of idiom is inevitable, for it is the cultural 'occasions' rather than the meaning of the idiom that we are handling, that it to say, the function, not the semantic aspect, of the

idiom. Dictionaries will be of little help here, as the translator will need to re-create each 'occasion' and supply the appropriate idiom.

An Englishman's "Brother!" or "I'll never" or "of all things" can get any number of equivalents from"يا خبر!" - "مش ممكن!" - "يا نهار!" to "شوف إزاى" and "معقولة دى" etc.. An occasional identity of functional and semantic aspects should not delude us into attempting further identities – So, 'I needed that' seems to fit almost precisely (in both aspects) أدى اللى كان ناقص – but that is only one instance; and only a limited number of idioms here and there will be happily matched in both aspects, such as 'God forbid' (لا قدر الله!), 'who says?' (مين قال؟) "thingummy's gone" (البتاع ضاع) "what's his name's here" (اسمه ايه وصل) but others will have pragmatic equivalents only: "What next?" (عيب كده؟) or (ولسه!) -- 'perish the thought!" (فَشَرْ) or (حد الله!) or (لا يمكن ابداً) etc..

To accept a pragmatic approach to the first type of idiom is to accept the culture-based approach. Categories which are easy to correlate in both languages include the religion-based idiom (God willing إن شاء الله) and those expressions rooted in basic human activity (like basic vocabulary) – examples with the root 'take':

- he took a decision	اخذ قرار
- he took to her	اخذ عليها (ولَف عليها)
- he took a kiss	اخذ بوسة
- he took no notice	ما خدش باله
- he took precautions	خد احتياطات
- he took a step	اخذ خطوة

Other categories have not been studied and therefore require further inquiry.

The second type of idiom is what Mackin and McCaig designate 'pure idiom', that is, a number of words whose total meaning is *not* equivalent to the sum total of the individual meanings of the words. 'To blow the gaff' is the perfect example (يفشي السر) where neither the blowing nor the gaff can suggest divulging a secret. The problem with this type is that Arabists will never admit to having anything like it in our language. I claim the contrary. In fact I have more examples of this type in Arabic than most compilers of dictionaries of English idioms have produced. The trouble is, of course, that Arabic lexicographers have persistently tried to find a logical explanation for each as though it would be a blemish on the language of the Arabs to be occasionally illogical. Al-Zamakhshari in his *Asaas El-Balaghah* offers forced readings for some of the common idioms in Classical Arabic with sad results: استأصل شأفتهم (literally 'removed their scab') means to wipe them out; افرخ روعه (literally 'his fear's eggs have hatched') means that his fear has gone etc... In each case Al-Zamakhshari finds an indefensible explanation as he assumes that any fixed phrase must be metaphoric. In Egyptian Arabic we have plenty; فى عقل بالى simply means 'I thought' or 'in my mind', though the literal meaning (in the mind of my mind) sounds silly, as Professor Said Badawi has remarked. Other examples include يفهمها وهى طايرة (literally: he understands it while it flies) which means 'he can take a hint' (or he's extremely perceptive); يوريها العين الحمرا (literally: he shows her the red eye) which means 'he terrorizes her' or 'he makes her afraid of him'; and, to conclude this section, فاكرنى كرويا which means 'he thinks I am a fool'. I have failed to trace the origin of this word; explanations which relate it to يستكرد which is morphologically related to Kurds, the ethnic minority in Northern Iraq, whose plight the Gulf war has served to publicize, are uncertain and even untenable. Borderline idioms, such

as رقبتى سدَادة can be explained in the light of metaphoric idioms (in the case of اسدّ برقبتى – literally: I can do the job satisfactorily even if it costs me my neck, that is, I shall show devotion in the performance) – and metaphoric idioms are no less related to both English and Arabic cultures.

The fact is that Arabic, perhaps because it is such an ancient language, never seems to lose the original literal sense of words and expressions that have come to be metaphoric. In other words, the category of 'dead metaphor' which exists in Arabic no less than in other languages in not recognized widely enough in Arabic scholarship; in fact many Arabists will deny its existence, insisting that no figure of speech is truly dead, and that metaphoric idioms (which are one section of dead tropes) do not exist. Usage says otherwise. Nobody thinks of the literal meaning of expressions like نضب معينه (that is, his resources are exhausted; literally: his water has dried up);

١ ـ عاد بخفى حنين / ٢ ـ صفر اليدين / ٣ ـ خاوى الوفاض.

all meaning practically the same thing, that is 'he returned empty handed'; though the first must have had a story in our tradition on which it was based, (literally: he came back with Hunayn's slippers) now definitely forgotten. Some Arabist or other will no doubt come up with an invention involving the mysterious Hunayn and his slippers; the second means literally 'empty-handed', while the third refers instead to an 'empty sack'. Now consider the following three expressions with approximately the same meaning:

١ ـ لا يجارى ٢ ـ لا يبارى ٣ ـ لا يضارع

viz. unmatched or unparalleled. The first literally means 'cannot be beaten in a running contest' (or 'cannot be kept abreast of'), the second

'cannot be beaten at any match', the third 'cannot be equalled'. I do not believe anyone today uses any of these expressions with the thought of 'running' or a 'sports contest' or 'equality' even troubling him. They are metaphoric idioms deep-rooted in our culture, which simply transmit a meaning. There are less common expressions which are equally dead figures and as such are metaphoric idioms but which can come alive if the reader is totally unacquainted with them. An expression conveying nearly the same meaning but which belongs to the latter category is لا يشق غبـاره – which literally means 'no horse can run fast enough to get through the cloud of dust raised by the horse he's riding!' The average Arabic reader may require an explanation before he could visualize the scene; in the absence of an explanation he will pick the idiom and use it for the general meaning which will seem, however, to be more elegantly expressed in this idiom. Will the simple 'you can't beat him' do? or does it have to be 'peerless'? Would the Biblical 'unapproachable' be acceptable?

The translator is invariably at a loss how to do the metaphoric idioms into English: English ones, equally rooted in Western culture, will present little difficulty: all the translator normally does is see if the metaphor would be acceptable to the 'Arabic-trained' ear. If it is, then the equivalent will be provided; if not, only the abstract meaning. Consider the following English idioms *that have come to be* acceptable in certain Arabic contexts:

1. to twist one's arm — يلوى ذراعه
2. to flex his muscles — يستعرض عضلاته
3. there are more doves than hawks — عدد الحمائم اكبر من عدد الصقور
4. to get an idea of — يأخذ فكرة عن...

5. to lend a deaf ear — يعير اذناً صماء
6. to turn his back on — يدير ظهره لـ ...

But consider the following which are not acceptable and must be reduced to the general meaning – through interpretation:

1. to put his foot down — يصر على رأيه
2. to stick to his guns — يثبت فى موقفه
3. to blow his own trumpet — يتفاخر
4. a flash in the pan — برق كاذب/ بداية خادعة
5. he has a bee in his bonnet about — مهووس بكذا...
6. he has bats in the belfey — مشعور/ مهفوف

Having given these examples I shall make my point by giving the Arabic examples first before considering their difficulties, especially as some of them *can* be regarded as pure idioms:

١ ـ حكى لى الحكاية من طقطق لسلامو عليكو.

1. He told me the story from A to Z.

٢ ـ دورت عليه فى سلقط فى ملقط مالقيتهوش.

2. I looked everywhere but couldn't find it.

٣ ـ يكسب كتير لكن.. خدى يا سدره ودى يا مدره.

3. He does make a lot of money, but squanders it all.

٤ ـ رجعت لقيت البيت يضرب يقلب.

4. When I arrived back home, the house was a mess.

٥ ـ وعدنى يجيب الكتاب وادى وش الضيف.

5. He promised to get me the book but never came back.

٦ ـ عايزنى اضرب الأرض أطلع بطيخ.

6. He wants me to do it on the spot – which is impossible.

Well, the first difficulty concerns the view that regardless of whether a metaphoric idiom is 'live' or not, it should be treated as a metaphor, that is to say, it should be translated as it is, so as to give the reader a taste of the original '*culture*'. This view has been supported in practice by many journalists who transferred English expressions to Arabic. Mohamed Hassanain Haykal, the far-famed editor of Al-Ahram, is responsible for using, for the first time in Arabic, expressions like 'A lot of water flowed under the bridge' وتدفقت مياه كثيرة تحت الجسر - 'he gave him the green light' اعطاه الضوء الاخضر - both obviously metonyms with the status of 'dead figure' in English but which came alive, very much alive, in Arabic. The second in particular is getting so popular that it is already losing its 'live' character, while the first persists as a metaphor. Other instances are doubtful – 'we are in the same boat', once scoffed at when done literally, is gaining popularity as ونحن فى نفس القـارب ; while a common English idiom 'don't let the grass grow' was misunderstood in a popular translation of an Agatha Christie into ولا تدع الكلا ينمـو which is, of course, wrong, as the rest of the idiom is 'under your feet', meaning 'waste no time', and the general meaning should have been instead, لا تضيع وقـتـا. This and similar mistakes are being made all the time, actually, though this alone cannot be a reason for rejecting this view out of hand. Indeed, there is something to be said for the transmission of idiom to and from foreign cultures. In Arabic, it has given us the common لديه الورقة الرابحة – 'he holds a trump card' and other expressions from gambling.

The other view is that idioms should not be translated but that equivalent idioms in the target language should be found so that the text may sound idiomatic. This is more suited, in fact, to literary texts, for here the reader likes to have the familiar expressions of his language and the

familiar air created by such expressions. Thus طلع نابه على شونة – a pure idiom-- must be rendered as 'he made the effort in vain'; كان ينسج على هذا المنوال as 'he followed the same pattern' (literally: he was weaving on the same loom'); مسح بيه البلاط 'he gave him a dressing down' (literally: he wiped the floor tiles with him); ما فيهوش سريخ ابن يومين 'totally deserted' (literally: there wasn't even a two-day old infant; or the Shakespearean 'not a mouse stirring'); ويكفر سيئاته 'to give him a hard time' (literally; to enable him to expiate 'his sins'); or, finally, يطين عيشته or يطلع دينه meaning approximately the same thing, that is 'to give him hell'); though the first means literally to 'throw his life in mud', the second 'to make him renounce his religion'.

It is obvious that this category reflects the cultural matrix of the language more than 'pure idiom'. Like proverbs and proverbial sayings, most of the metaphor-based idioms are compact expressions of ideas or situations. And Arabic, more than English, resorts to proverbs at a certain level almost characteristically – as Professor Badawi has convincingly shown. The proverb-category is, by definition, untranslatable. Many proverbs have, of course, their near – but never exact – equivalents; and a fortunate translator will only rarely encounter these and may substitute the equivalent at the risk of a sacrifice: 'One man's meat is another man's poison' (مصائب قوم عند قوم فوائد) 'The early bird gets the worm' (الرزق يحب الخفيه) - 'Once bitten twice shy' (اللى تلسعه الشوربه ينفخ ع الزبادى) - 'he can't see the wood for the trees' تكاثرت الظباء على خراش، فما يدرى خراشٌ ما يصيد and so on. The last is, in particular, hardly an equivalent; but the suggestion of being 'at sea', at a loss, for not being able to see the general picture because of focusing too much on details, may be suggested by the bewilderment of the legendary Khirash who cannot shoot a single hart because the deer about him are too many!

A degree of cultural transformation is in fact necessary. There is no better example of this than the equation of the expression 'it warms the cockles of any heart' with إنه يثلج صـــدرى (literally; it cools my heart) or 'لقد قرت عيني به' (it has cooled off my eye)!

The last category of idiom, namely 'collocation', is peculiar to each language, and there can be no way of establishing any cultural dimensions for it. Perhaps we can do that with word combinations in different contexts, or with word-compounds, but that requires futher inquiry.

* * *



Arnoldian Paradox:

Notes on Wordsworth's Metaphor of The Mind

Today's Wordsworth is still, basically, Matthew Arnold's. The "selection" of 1879 has fared better than many twentieth-century attempts at representing Wordsworth and survived more than one revolution in taste. So has, in fact, Arnold's essay which first introduced that "selection" to a Victorian public of divided loyalty, then, less than a decade later, went into that volume of critical essays which continues, albeit indirectly, to influence our view of the English Romanticists. Not that Arnold was stinting in his praise of Wordsworth; indeed, his generalisations may still surprise many an ardent Wordsworthian. However, his assertion that Wordsworth "has no style", "no assured poetic style of his own", has not been always accepted(1). "Nature herself seems", he suggests, "to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her bare, sheer, penetrating power".

If we overcome those terminological problems which have for long prevented us from grasping the continuity of the English literary tradition, we shall recognize in Arnold's words a confirmation of what Wordsworth himself claimed to be his object, namely to take his models (linguistic or otherwise) from life ("nature") rather than books ("literature"). Translated into modern critical terms, Wordsworth wanted (and, according to Arnold, succeeded in his effort) to represent the actual language spoken by men: in the "dramatic parts of composition" the language of the characters had to "reflect" their

social class as well as their "mental constitution", and, in lyrical and descriptive pieces, a persona was to be invented whose language would change from one emotional attitude to another.

Now in its emphasis on "inspiration" and the "communication" of the poet's "spirit" to us, and in its glorification of Wordsworth's linguistic "naturalness", Arnold's essay has encouraged the modern critical view that the romantics were advocates of self-expression who wanted to be 'sincere' by being "spontaneous". Paradoxically, however, by accepting Wordsworth's claim of endeavouring to be as faithful to his immediate model (a character or a scene) as he possibly could, the essay implies a concept of art definitely closer to classical *mimesis* than to romantic self-expression. Arnold's implied concept of the romantic mind was not, to borrow Abrams's useful terms, in basic opposition to the metaphoric mirror of the classicists (even while suggesting the romantic lamp as well)(3).

In comparison with the "literary" achievement of the eighteenth century, Wordsworth's published work between 1798 and 1802 tends to support Arnold's implication that Wordsworth is to be seen as the leader of a "revolt against literature"(4). To write poetry without being literary in a formal sense is to try to "get behind poetry altogether and make a photograph (or a recording) of the raw data of human experience which might preserve the original emotion"(5) – as though the *truth* can only be achieved if a copy of the earliest available lingusitic version of a given experience is produced so that experience is seized "before it has been interpreted at all"(6). We may find it easy today to believe that a poet's ideal is to be truthful to his individual sense-impressions, including those of linguistic reality, because we

have been brought up to accept the "imagist" principle that "perceptions are truer, at least more fundamental and certain, than the inferences" we build on them, that "we must go back to primary perceptions, seizing them in their full immediacy, if we have any hope of attaining a reliable interpretation of things"(7). The fact that Arnold's argument concerning the lack of a "literary" style is based on the assumption that a poet was able to surrender completely to his material (nature, the actual language of the people etc.) makes him anticipate the concept of a conscious "revolt against literature".

Arnold may have been only partly conscious of this paradox. He does not explain how the "revolutionary" poet who achieved "expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind"(8) could have done this by imitating nature in accordance with the classical rules of *mimesis.* The essay suggests, furthermore, that the "permanence" achieved by Wordsworth was due to his vindication of certain universally valid standards of truth in which Arnold himself believed – a basically neo-classical idea. "Wordsworth's poetry", argues Arnold, "is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote the poem for him"(9). To reconcile expression – the "communication" of the poet's "spirit" to us through the "Muse, the inspiration, the God" that is within – with the imitation of nature is not an easy task; and Arnold does not try to reconcile them. It is a paradox for which the first generation of romantic poets are responsible, but it is useful and may be essential to our understanding of their work. It may also help us to reconsider the views of some modern poet-critics who profess to be in basic opposition to the romantic tradition.

If, as A. C. Bradley has observed, "the road into Wordsworth's mind must be through his paradoxes and not round them"(10), we may have to accept this paradox rather than resolve it. An inevitable question which lies at its very heart is: can a poet be most significantly himself when he is most faithful to external reality? The 'modern' answer, as suggested by I.A. Richards(11), has been Coleridge's own "coalescence of subject and object" – an epistemological principle which, though basic to the romantic mode of apprehending reality, is no less relevant to all modes of human perception. Nor will it be helpful to relate this principle merely to metaphor, at least insofar as image-making involves a kind of mental activity decidedly different from "normal" human perception.

The problem is again, I believe, one of critical terminology. We use "subject" and "object" sometimes in a modern sense, often in a traditional sense, but rarely in the sense primarily intended by Wordsworth. Our consciousness of Wordsworth's meanings of these key words will show that Arnold's paradox follows naturally from his predecessor's composite metaphor of the mind as both *lamp* and *mirror*. It will show that, like Hazlitt, who has been accused of confusing the two metaphors(12), Wordsworth believes that poetry "flows from the sacred shrine of our own breasts", is "kindled at the living lamp of nature:" then, "reflected by true genius, this light" becomes real art(13). Coleridge himself is not far from combining the two metaphors when he asserts that it is "from the soul itself" that "a light must issue forth" before it can be reflected again by the mind into art(14); in 1806 he addressed a poem to his poet-friend on first hearing the 13-book *Prelude*, in which he says:

When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received
The light reflected, as a light received – [15].

It was Wordsworth's original view of man's mental development through an intimate relationship with "nature" that, particularly during his "great decade", lay at the basis of his composite metaphor of the mind. It was that view, according to which man and nature shared the same "quickening soul" and were integral parts of one living "great whole"[16] impelled by the same "*active* principle"[17], that kept the Augustan mimetic mirror alive and combined it with the romantic lamp. In 1798-1800, while he was engaged in considering how "the first/Poetic spirit of our human life"[18] evolved in childhood, he produced certain passages explaining the interaction between the mind of man and the "soul of nature", and nature's role in fostering man's creativity. In these and later passages we are continually reminded of man's belonging in the universe, of his dependence as a child on sense impressions which "crowd in and give the mind its needful food"[19], and that man's communion with the outside world takes place at both physical and spiritual levels. While man feeds his body on sense impressions ("those hallow'd and pure motions of the sense")[20], his mind recognizes its own powers: the process of "assimilating" the external world is also one of exploring the mind's potential and its affinities with the "active universe"[21] in which it belongs. The innate "yearnings"[22] and the "absolute necessities which struggle in us" and which must be satisfied.

Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites are ours,
And they must have their food;[23]–

are eventually "resolved into one great faculty/ Of being": "bodily eye and spiritual need", thus united, become an instrument of achieving unity with external reality[24]. Equal emphasis is laid, in the process of growing up, on the power of the mind as an "agent of the one great mind"[25] and the "mighty indeed... supreme power/ Of living Nature"[26]: both are equally living and worthy of each other.[27]

These ideas were sufficiently basic to the poet's thinking about the creative process to be expressed over and over again, both in prose and verse, throughout the great decade. The early assertion that the mind is "creator and receiver both,/ Working but in alliance with the works/ Which it beholds"[28] was developed a few years later, in a manuscript dating from 1804, into the generalization that the mind and the universe are "equal" to each other – not only because of "those first affinities that fit/ Our new existence to existing things"[29] but because of intrinsic qualities which make them "counterparts" or "images" of each other. In the process of growing up man reaches a stage of poetic maturity – "second birth".

He feels that, be his mind however great
In aspiration, the universe in which
He lives is equal to his mind, that each
Is worthy of the other; if the one
Be insatiate, the other is inexhaustible.
Whatever dignity there be
Within himself, from which he gathers hope,
There doth he feel its counterpart the same
In kind before him outwardly express'd
With difference that makes the likeness clear,

Sublimities, grave beauty, excellence...
        Therefore he cleaves
Exclusively to Nature as in her
Finding his image, what he has, what lacks,
His rest and his perfection.

MS Y of The Prelude,
11.171-181, 199-202 (cf. note19)

And in the Prospectus to *The Excursion*, written probably in 1806 [30], Wordsworth explicitly states that he would

            proclaim
Speaking of nothing more than what we are
How exquisitely the individual mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external world
Is fitted: – and how exquisitely, too –
Theme this but little heard of among men –
The external World is fitted to the Mind;
And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish: –

P.W., V, p. 5 (MS2)

These lines obviously recall the argument stated in prose four years earlier when he came to amplify certain parts of the Preface. The poet, he says, "considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting qualities of nature"[31].The work of the poet, he

explains, may appear "altogether slavish and mechanical" inasmuch as it requires faithful "description and imitation" of both human passions and natural objects, but it is not so in effect: it involves close and deep interaction between the artist and his subject(32). In handling human passions the poet should try to "identify his own feelings with those of his characters"(33); to remove those impediments which "stand between the poet and the image of things"(34) he must draw upon "the picture... in the mind [which] would ... present the ideal and essential truth of [a given] scene"(35). The mental mirror, though faithful in its reflection as "waters" are to the sky's countenance, though "obedient" in responding to nature as a "lute/ That waits upon the touches of the wind"(36), enjoys a degree of independence insofar as it is selective and retentive.

"Tenacious", Wordsworth argues, of some "of the forms which it receives",(37) the mind preserves theme –

> The scenes...
> Remained, in their substantial lineaments
> Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
> Were visible, a daily sight;(38) –

and it works on them, by thus exposing them increasingly to its light. When the passions and the scenes come to be worked out in poetry they will have undergone a certain transformation through the passage of time, that is, through being exposed for a certain period to the light of the mind. It is this time factor which, in effect, helps the mirror to unite with the lamp and the final work to capture the "essential truth" of a passion or a scene as apprehended by the individual poet.

The light of the mind is not, however, entirely innate. It is,

according to Wordsworth, partly acquired (as man's creative power continues to change in response to individual experiences). It cannot be purely "mental" in much the same way as objective reality cannot be completely external (a point fully discussed by Richards and C.C.Clarke)(38). What we need to add is that Arnold's paradox, though it refers but obliquely to the light of the mind, helps to explain the role of what Wordsworth describes as "recollection" in the creative process – a word easily misunderstood nowadays but understood only too well by Coleridge. "Recollection" is not to be confused with "memory", pure and simple, or to be allied to the work of Coleridge's "fancy" which is tantamount to memory "emancipated from the order of time and space")(40); it is rather a mode of *fusion in time* of recent with past experiences which are in effect living realities in the mind. The temporal distance is essential for the creative process to begin, and Wordsworth is careful to use this very verb, insisting that poetry takes its origin, but does not consist, in recollected emotion(41). The process of fusion is akin to Eliot's concept of "concentration" or condensation of immediate experiences with many others which, according to Wordsworth, must be responsible partly for the quality of mental light thrown on them. Eliot's use of "scientific" terms (borrowed, that is, from the natural sciences) does not make his analogy more valid than Wordsworth's. One will be hard put to it accept as scientific a metaphor of the mind as a receptacle or a catalyst that remains "inert, neutral and unchanged" in the process of condensing experiences into verse(42).

Arnold's paradox reveals an aspect of romanticism which modern criticism has done much to obscure. By endeavouring to go back to "nature", and in their firm belief in the faithful representation of

reality as a poetic ideal, the romantics were not departing so drastically from classical theory. With the Augustans they shared a belief in the existence of universally valid standards of "truth" (and in such things as "correct" and "incorrect" taste, mimesis and, above all, levels of style). The "revolt against literature" was in inception a rejection of the artificial and affected modes of expression that pervaded the work of some minor poets and poetasters of the eighteenth century, while the truly grand manner of the classics was always respected, aspired to and sometimes achieved. The change in the metaphor of the mind from mirror to lamp should be seen only as indicative of a shift of emphasis; but the two metaphors could never be divorced from each other, no less in the days of Queen Anne than in the days of George III.

* * *

Notes

(1) *Poems of Wordsworth*, ed. M. Arnold, 1896, p. 22. Apart from the fact that Arnold's selection defeats his purpose, inasmuch as it presents a variety of styles easily identifiable in six sections (which, however, clearly overlap both chronologically and stylistically), modern scholars have shown that Wordsworth has a distinctive style and have indicated its peculiar qualities (cf.G. Hartman, *Wordsworth's Poetry: 1787-1814,* Yale University press, 1964; J. Danby, *The Simple Wordsworth*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960; Albert S. Gerard, "Exploring "Tintern Abbey", *Studies in Romanticism*, III, 1963, pp. 10-23; and David Perkins, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity*, Oxford University Press, 1964. I have tried in my Ph. D. thesis, University of Reading, 1975, to show that the distinctive style – which I have identified as covering three stylistic modes, namely the meditative-descriptive (which has affinites with late eighteenth-century practice), the balladic and the high-meditative – was not the only one attempted by Wordsworth. It was preceded by the narrative-descriptive and dramatic styles, and led to the birth of the grand-abstract style which is recognizable in the later books of *The Prelude, The Excursion* and much of the work of 1814-1845. Modern methods of stylistic analysis support my view that Wordsworth was a stylist who never ceased to experiment with and often succeeded in evolving new styles of his own.

(2) *Ibid*., p. 25. A vaster inquiry may be needed if we have any hope of knowing exactly what Arnold means by this. Is "Nature", to begin with, to be identified with the romantic poets' view of it? Is Arnold, perhaps, referring to a basic language of mankind – a hypothetical "natural" language, universal, permanent and incapable of change? Does "bare" imply lack of stylistic "adornment" – figures of speech, syntactical and other features of the 'high' or simply "developed" styles

of the English tradition from Spenser and Shakespeare to Milton and the Augustans? The comparison Arnold draws between Shakespeare and Milton on the one hand and Wordsworth on the other only complicates matters, for he does not hesitate to quote lines in the grand-abstract style (which contrasts so sharply with that of his favourite *Michael*) believing them to be still distinctively Wordsworthian:

Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope
And melancholy fear subdued by faith,
Of blessed consolations in distress,
Of moral strength and intellectual power,
Of joy in widest commonalty spread –

(*Ibid.*, p. 16)

He should have given the rest of the period – with the delayed verb "sing" echoing Milton's invocation in *Paradise Lost*, I., 1-6 and the final deliberate Miltonic coda (*P.L.*, III, 30-31):

Of the individual Mind that keeps her own
Inviolate retirement, subject there
To Conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all —
I sing: "fit audience let me find though few!"

(*Prospectus* to *The Excursion*)

Arnold could never have regarded this as a "style of perfect plainness" and "bald expression", whatever our definition of these may be.

(3) M. E. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp*, Oxford University Press, 1953, Chapter III, part iii.

(4) Helen Darbishire, *The Poet Wordsworth*, Oxford, 1950, p. 53.

(5) R. Sharrock. "Wordsworth's Revolt against Literature" in *Wordsworth's Mind and Art*, ed. A.W. Thomson. Edinburgh, 1969, p. 66.

(6) David Perkins, *Wordsworth and the Poetry of Sincerity*, p. 22.

(7) *Ibid.*, p. 23.

(8) *Poems of Wordsworth*, ed. M. Arnold, p. 23.

(9) *Ibid*, p. 22.

(10) *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*, 2nd ed., 1963, \p. 101.

(11) *Coleridge on Imagination*, Chapter III.

(12) Abrams, *Op. Cit.* P. 52.

(13) *Collected Works of William Hazlitt*, ed. P.P. Howe vol. 18, p. 9

(14) *Dejection: An Ode*, 11. 53-4.

(15) *To William Wordsworth*, 11. 18-19.

(16) *The Prelude*, 1805, iii, 128 and 131.

(17) *The Excursion* , IX, 3. This reading is found in the earliest extant manuscript of the opening of this "book", namely MS 18a which dates from 1798-9, and accords with the ideas expressed in contemporary verses, particularly *The Prelude* I-II parts of which are found in this manuscript; cf. *The Prelude*, ed. de Selincourt, 1959, p. xxvii. Elsewhere de Selincourt noted that the relation of thought expressed (in that passage) to that of *Lines Composed ... above Tintern Abbey*, written about the same time, is obvious enough (*Wordsworth's Poetical Works*, ed. de Selincourt, vol. V, p. 471).

(18) *The Prelude*, 1805, ii, 275-6.

(19) Line 39 of a fragment produced in the autumn of 1804 and designated MS Y, *The Prelude*, ed. de Selincourt, p. 572.

(20) *The Prelude*, 1805 i, 578.

(21) *Ibid.*, ii. 266.

(22) *Ibid*, iv, 280.

(23) *Ibid.*, v, 530-1

(24) MS Y, 153-4; cf. note (19) *supra*.

(25) *The Prelude*, 1905, ii, 272.

(26) *Ibid.*, v, 166-7.

(27) *The Prelude*, ed. de Selincourt, p. 576.

(28) *The Prelude*, 1805, ii, 273-5.

(29) *Ibid.*, i. 582-3.

(30) According to the de Selincourt-Darbishire edition of the Complete Works (*P.W.*, V, p. 372) these lines are found in MS 2 which is included in MS B of *The Recluse* which has been shown by J.A. Finch to have been composed not in 1800 but after *The Prelude* had been completed (*Bicentenary Wordsworth Studies*, ed. J. Wordsworth, 1970, pp. 14-28). This is supported by internal evidence, namely the grand-abstract style of the lines which was not developed until the later stages of the composition of *The Prelude*.

(31) Preface to the 2nd edition *of Lyrical Ballads*, P.W., II, p. 396.

(32) *Ibid.*, p. 394.

(33) Ibid., p. 394.

(34) *Ibid.*, p. 395.

(35) Conversation with Aubrey de Vere cited in Garrod. *Wordsworth*,1958, p. 45.

(36) *The Prelude*, 1805, iii. 137-8

(37) *Ibid.*, ii, 254.

(38) *Ibid.* i, 627-30.

(39) In Op. cit., same chapter; cf. C.C. Clarke's *Romantic Paradox*, 1962.

(40) *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Shawseross, vol. I, p. 202. Cf. Basil Willey's comment on the "Fusion of subject and object in the act of imagination" in his *Nineteenth-Century Studies, Penguin* ed., 1964, p. 29. *et seq.*

(41) *The Preface, P.W.* II, pp. 400-401.

(42) *The Sacred Wood*, (ed. of 1950) p. 54.

APPENDIX I

The Abstract of *Fusul*, April 1983
ed. Izz El-Din Ismail
tr. Maher Shafiq Farid

"Comparative literature" is a branch of literary study sharing some general characteristics with other branches but contradistinguished from them in other respects. Its distinguishing characteristics stem from its goals and ambitions as well as from the controversies and problems to which its very nature has given rise. Comparative literature, as a branch of study, originated in connection with a certain "positivism" stressing *rapports de fait* and looking for relations between writers of different nationalities. Ever since its beginnings, it has shown a "humanistic" tendency and an interest in spiritual affinities manifested in different literatures. In this it has sought to reach down to the human root transcending regional frontiers and lying – like a first cause – behind different manifestations of national literatures.

The "positivitic" origins of comparative literature have helped to draw it to the orbit of historical studies. For a long time, it was regarded as a branch of literary history. Comparatists were regarded as historians of literary affinities with an interest in sources, origins, intermediaries, translations, froms of influence, causalities and thematology.

They were also interested in successive movements of thought and the vicissitudes of writers' reputations through time and place. By dint of its "humanistic" orientation, comparative literature sought values of a singular kind. The aesthetic approach, for instance, tried to establish links between comparative literature and literary criticism. Other approaches were interested in the movement of ideas, and so their endeavours were directed upon the relation between comparative literature, general history of ideas and sociology. Both approaches, however, implied a kind of paradox latent in the very goals they set themeselves. For one thing, the "humanistic" orientation of these approaches was more often than not an elusive expression of a stubborn national tendency.

Comparative literature, in this light, wavered for long between two opposite poles, namely history and literary criticism. In so far as it got nearer to history, it lost touch with the specific characteristics making for the "literariness" of literature: its *langue* manifested in *parole*. In as much as comparative literature came nearer to literary criticism, it steered clear of the "positivism" which made it a legitimate discipline and of the "causality" which, to many scholars, was at the root of its very existence. This restless movement between two opposite poles became, however, more tense: it became more complicated and more problematic owing, on the one hand, to multiplicity of opposite poles and on the other, to the radical changes that literary studies have undergone. A third reason for this noticeable problematicality is the growing complexity of human knowledge as infiltrated into literary concepts. As a result of the factors cited above, comparative literature – in its present situation – confronts students of contemporary literature with many challenges: these range from the very nomenclature

"comparative literature" to the epistemological foundations upon which it is based, as an autonomous discipline or as one that strives towards the condition of autonomy.

The aim of this issue – and of the forthcoming one – is to face these problems and challenges by concentrating on a number of questions and applications. The next issue will seek to supplement the present one for further understanding of comparative literature, both theoretically and in application.

The first question posed by this issue is one related to the epistemological origins of comparative literature and the theoretical dimensions of its various schools and tendencies. It is also related to some coginitive concepts: such as the concept of influence, the correspondences between comparative literature and the philosophy of literature and the place of comparative literature among contemporary studies of the theory of literature. This first question poses the "problematicality" of comparative literature as well as the possibility of a new epistemological condition in which the term "comparative literature" may be replaced by "criticism of comparison" and the term "influence" may be replaced by the term "parallelism".

Attempts to answer this question are spread over seven theoretical studies at the head of this present issue. Theoretical exposition, in these seven studies, goes hand in hand with methodological search for roots. The concepts underlying these studies may conflict, harmonize or correspond but they all seek – in their different ways – to answer this basic question.

The first of these seven studies is Abdul-Hakim Hassan's "Comparative Literature: The American and the French Concepts". Here the

writer reviews the rise of comparative literature in France and the historical conditions making for the components of the traditional French school: one represented by the names of Fernand Baldensperger, Paul Van Tieghem, M. Francois Guyard and Jean-Marie Carré. This French school has confined comparative literature to the domain of international literary relations and the actual affinities between different literatures in the light of reception, mediation and influence. It is a school, however, that has come to an impasse: this shows in the lack of a clear-cut definition of the subject and the methods of comparative literature. it also shows in a certain disregard of the literary texts themselves in favour of causal laws supposed to produce a surface objectivity which turns out, in the end, to be a mere mask of national tendencies. The reader may recall René Wellek's "The Crisis of Comparative Literature"; it was an essay that exposed the methodological defects of the French school and heralded a different trend that came to be known as the American school, though Wellek himself objected to the nomenclature. This so-called American school stresses the critical nature of comparative studies as well as the vast domain of possible comparisons. It ends, however, in a sort of problematicality: it has not drawn a sharp line of distinction between "comparative literature" and "general literature" as to subject-matter and method. Besides, its definition of comparative literature implies some kind of duality, especially when the concept is made wide enough to accommodate comparisons between literature and the other arts.

Abdel-Hakim Hassan's paper refers – implicitly – to the contribution of Ulrich Weisstein who tends to stress the literary character of comparative studies and endows the concept of "influence" with a wider significance: transcending the dominant historical character of

the term, in traditional studies, to achieve a deeper concept making use of the studies of the American (but Egyptian-born) critic Ihab Hassan whose ideas are largely a reaction against Wellek's. Hence, Abdel-Hakim Hassan's study is followed by a translation – from the pen of Mustapha Maher – of a chapter entitled "Influence and Imitation" from Weisstein's *Einführung in die Vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft* (1968).

The concept of "Influence" is basic to all comparative studies assuming as it does the existence of two separate entities that can be compared: On the one hand, there is the source of influence; on the other there is its object. The concept does not involve a straightforward relation of causality though it is not unrelated to it. It does not conduce to a preference of the work exercising the influence to the one showing it. Rather, it aims at putting into relief the mechanism of the manifestation of the "influencer" into the "influenced", with a view to a revelation of the morphology of the latter. Influence is more often than not an unconscious process; imitation – or parody – is on the other hand a conscious procedure. Weisstein's study discusses various kinds of imitation and forms of influence. It also shows the contradistinction between these and the study of "sources" and "reception" asserting that the process of influence implies a network of events, entangled and imterpenetrating: working in a chronological succession but under conditions dictated by every single case.

Next we come to Samir Sarhan's "The Concept of Influence in Comparative Literature". The premises underlying this essay are similar to Weisstein's. Sarhan, however, starts with a discussion of certain negative concepts beclouding his main thesis in an attempt to establish

a link between "influence" and the specific process of creativity. He takes exception, however, to Weisstein's view of parallel studies as an acceptable field of study. Hence Sarhan shows a kind of eclecticism: he has room for a number of historical, aesthetic and critical approaches to the study of literature and gauging the process of artistic creation.

While Samir Sarhan's paper relies for inspiration on the ideas of the so-called American school, Ragaa Abdel-Moneim Gabr's "Comparative Literature and the Philosophy of Literature" harks back to the so-called French school. It draws, however, on its later manifestations, transcending the narrow historical perspective and making use of the contribution of René Etiemble. Ragaa Gabr, however, pays special tribute to the work of Claude Pichois and André Rousseau, co-authors of *La Littérature Comparée* (1967). Pichois and Rousseau are interested in the history of ideas and literary structures. To them, comparative literature comes under the category of the philosophy of literature. In as much as they steer clear of literary history aiming at a verification of facts, they come close to literary criticism showing types and systems of the subject of comparison.

Ragaa Gabr starts by a definition of comparative literature based on an approach to literary phenomena from the angle of language and culture. This implies an analytical description, a methodological comparison establishing preferences and a synthetical interpretation of these literary phenomena in the light of history, criticism and philosophy. The object is a fresher understanding of literature as a manifestation of the human spirit. By adopting this definition that combines analysis and synthesis, a comparatist is able to trace the constitutional

elements of literary phenomena on the one hand, and their relations on the other. This should end in a synthetic concept revealing the secrets of literature as a unique effective way of apprehending reality. Out of this dialectic alternation of analysis and synthesis a great momentum will emerge, such as could bring comparative literature out of the rut describd by Wellek (1959) and Etiemble (1966) alike.

Ragaa Gabr adopts certain notions of contemporary French comparatists; he dwells on such concepts as the process of interpretation, the unchangeable literary essences and the correspondences between the arts. This leads to a definition of the morphology of literary form and brings the study of comparative literature to the conclusion that there is a primary human nature of which literature is but one manifestation.

Amina Rasheed's "Contemporary Literature and Contemporary Studies of the Theory of Literature" seems to rely on different principles at the same time that it seeks to achieve a clear-cut goal: namely, to show the link between the development and evolution of comparative literature and the question of literary epistemology with the dialectic it entails between science and ideology; a dialectic that has been in motion ever since the inception of comparative studies. This ideological orientation can be traced back to the "universalism" of the eighteenth century: one that crystallized with the philosophy of the age of enlightenment. On the other hand, this scientific orientation is indebted to the French climate of thought in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Both tendencies have given rise to a kind of European centrality: this has been challenged by Etiemble from an aesthetic-ethical point of view, and by Edward Said who sought to expose its

pseudo character. It has also been transcended by studies of "Cross Culture". The fact remains, however, that the crisis of comparative literature is not unique to itself: it is a crisis of the whole of literary criticism. It is related to its search for tools and methods making for a deeper understanding of literary texts, in all their inner complexity and in relation to society and to different ideological structures.

John Fletcher's "The Criticism of Comparison" starts from the crisis of comparative literature, but tends to view it from a singular angle. Fletcher asserts that, from the point of view of subject-matter, comparative literature has not introduced a new method. He also asserts that the contrast implied in the very phrase "comparative literature" is far from being felicitous. In place of the term "comparative literature" Fletcher suggests another, namely "the criticism of comparison". To him, the comparative approach is a tool that is effective in the domain of general literature, not as literary history but as a way of revealing the basic structures underlying literary phenomena in all places and at all times. The process of comparison is, therefore, synchronic in essence, though it may be directed upon sucessive works of literature. The comparative approach lies somewhere between arbitrary formalism and blindfold historicism: it belongs with literary criticism seeking, like it, to reveal the essence of the art of writing. This means that literature should be apprehended in its dynamic mechanism, and the forms resulting therefrom. It also means that the literary subject owes its very existence to a network of relationships that can be apprehended – in the act of comparison – through analysis and synthesis only. In order to achieve this goal, comparative literature should make use of structuralist linguistics, revealing undercurrents and deep structures or, to put it differently, the *langue* behind

the *parole* of literary texts. Etiemble seems to have been moving towards a similar position when he asserts that comparative literature makes for a "comparative poetics" i.e. a revelation of the structural systems in the framework of which literary works fall. In this way, comparative criticism is able to reveal certain aspects of the creative process, such as the genesis and insemination of works of art through contact with other works. In the second place, criticism will be able to shed light on literature as an autonomous institution, with its own mechanisms, contradistinguished from its social milieu, though not unrelated to it. Finally, criticism should be able to illuminate literature as a universal phenomenon: of one substance but different manifestations. Comparison is, in the last analysis, a mode of thought. It assumes that essence precedes existence and that the whole precedes its parts. To achieve this ultimate goal, a critic has to fight against parochialism and stick to objectivity: he will attain a knowledge of what he knows through a significant comparison with what could be known.

Next, we come to Kamal Abu Deeb's "The Problematicality of Comparative Literature". The point of departure here is a theoretical background not dissimilar to Fletcher's but characterized by a direct orientation towards Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic model, in an attempt to base the conceptual model of literature on a linguistic basis. The problematicality of comparative literature takes many forms: the nomenclature itself is far from satisfactory; the study of literature from without is defective; the internal relations between literary texts are often ignored; chauvinistic tendencies and racial prejudices may crop up to the surface at any moment. According to Abu Deeb, the solution to this "problematicality" lies in stressing synchronism rather than diachronism. Saussure's duality of *langue* and *parole* should be turned into

an effective concept in the domain of comparative criticism. A comparatist will therefore view literary works, in different literatures, as manifestations of *parole* revealing basic systems which are the *langue* of different works. Corollary to this emphasis on synchronism is an emphasis on the duality of *langue* and *parole*.

The "literariness" of literary works is stressed so much so that all that lies beyond it is banished. The literary quality is a network of relationships; a total structure involving similarity, contrast and juxtaposition. The study of "influence", from this point of view, is no longer part of comparative criticism: it rather belongs with cultural history, literary sociology and the history of ideas. Comparative literature is ultimately a search for the constitutional elements of literary texts: it deals with relations of similarity, contrast and juxtaposition and attempts to reach the conditions making for the semantic system of all the arts, from within and not from without.

Would this model, in which Kamal Abu Deeb draws on the traditions of contemporary structuralist linguistics, solve the "problematicality of comparative literature"? Or does the linguistic model itself present us with a new problem? In order to answer these questions, it may be useful to reconsider the concepts inherent in the papers cited above. No conclusive answer, however, can be reached unless these theoretical concepts are put into action, that is in application to given texts. It is the application which will show how sound theoretical concepts are. It is also a means of verification on the level of literary study. Hence the present issue proceeds from the theoretical to the applied. A variety of methods, it is hoped, will bring the reader to a better understanding of the various aspects of comparative literature.

The second axis of this issue, then, consists in applied studies in the domain of European literature. On a third level, the reader will encounter comparisons between oriental literatures: Arabic, Persian and Turkish. Fourthly, we shall present studies in which comparisons are made between Arabic and European literature in an attempt to shed light on some aspects of the impact of the East upon the West.

Section II of the present issue starts with a study by Boris Eichenbaum of "O. Henry and the Theory of the Short Story", translated into Arabic by Nasr Abu Zeid. Although this study does not fall under the heading of "comparative literature", in the strict sense of the words, still it is related to it from two points of view. On the one hand, it is an important document of Russian Formalism, one of the origins of modern structuralism (Eichenbaum's study was published in 1927, one year after the appearance of his seminal work *The Theory of Formal Method*, in which he asserts that Formalism is a scientific method steering clear of ideology to concentrate on the *données* of the literary subject-matter, thus furthering our knowledge of it, through observation of distinguishing formal traits). On the other hand, Eichenbaum's study opens with some striking remarks on the question of "influence". These stem from a clear-cut conception of literary history as a process of dialectical evolution of literary forms. Hence Eichenbaum links the popularity of the stories of O. Henry – in translation – with the search of Russian writers for new forms: a fact that would suggest that O.Henry's influence was a kind of dialectic between an established American form and Russian forms in the making, apart from historical or national ties. Eichenbaum draws the attention of the reader to the changes that the fiction of O. Henry underwent, hermeneutically speaking, in the course of the process of its reception by the Rus-

sians. He also dwells on the form of the short story and the elements distinguishing it from the novel form.

Eichenbaum's formalist study is followed – in this issue – by a thematic one, different in persepective and method. David Constan writes on a specific literary type, namely that of "The Misanthrope". He pursues its manifestations in Greek, English and French literature through a study of three plays: Menander's *Dyscholus*, Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens* and Moliere's *The Misanthrope*. Constan seeks to find out the constant elements that go to the making of the significance of the "Misanthrope" as a human and literary type: but he also treats of the changeable elements attributing them to a changed "vision of the world" in each of the three plays under consideration. His study, therefore, moves between the two poles of explication and interpretation, analyzing each play separately, showing the interaction of structure and type and pointing out the links between the specific manifestations of the type, on the one hand, and the social forms of the age, on the other. The movement is, therefore, one from within to without, with emphasis on the literary and social character of the texts compared, on the one hand, and the social forms of the age, on the other. The movement is, therefore, one from within to without, with emphasis on the literary and social character of the texts compared.

Abdel Wahab el-Messiri's "Fictional Sermons on Freedom and Necessity" moves in a different direction. It is a study of the parallelisms between Chaucer's "The Franklin's Tale" (one of *The Canterbury Tales*) and Brecht's *The Rule and the Exception*. The writer is more interested in elements of parallelism than in any possible influences. Parallelism is taken, in this context, to involve both similarities and

dissimilarities. There are important differences, both formal and thematic, between the work of the English Chaucer who belongs to the fourteenth century and the work of the German Brecht who belongs to the first half of the twentieth century. These differences, however, do not exclude a basic resemblance on a deeper level: for one thing, both writers reflect a vision of the world of masters. Both deal with the issue of man's freedom and responsibility from the point of view of the beginnings of the modern era in the case of Chaucer, and of the present age in the case of Brecht.

Radwa Ashour goes a step further in exploring the correspondences, symmetries and contrasts inherent in the concept of parallelism. In a study of "Man and the Sea" she shows the connection between Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) and Etiematov's *The Piebald Dog* written between December 1976 and January 1977. The writer is not concerned with the question: Did the Russian novelist read the work of his American counterpart? (There is about a quarter of a century separating the two works). Rather she is interested in the significance of the literary form in both novels. This form she regards as the basic tool for producing an ideological attitude to a specific phenomenon, namely the confronatation between man and nature, represented by the sea in both novels.

With Mohamed Mohamed Yunis' "Literature of the Candle: Menujahri al-Damghani and Abu al Fadl al Mikali" we come to section III of this issue. The focus here is on comparisons between oriental literatures. Yunis' essay is concerned with the treatment of "the candle" in classical Arabic and in Persian poetry. In a preamble to an encomiastic poem by the Persian poet Menujahri (d. 432h), the "candle" is strik-

ingly described and personified in an unprecedented way. While full credit is given to al-Damghani's originality, his debt to the poetic Arabic legacy is stressed and the process of impact recorded. The verses of Abu al Fadl Al Mikali (d. 436h) were one of the formative influences on the descriptive preamble of the Persian poet's work.

Mohamed Haridi's "Bovaryism in the Egyptian and the Turkish Novel" is a study, from a different stand, of the impact of a European novel on modern Arabic and Turkish literature. The point of departure is Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* and its possible influence on two works: *Hakaza Khulikat (the Way She was Made)* by Mohamed Hussein Heikal, a pioneer of the Arabic novel in Egypt; and *A Palace for Rent* by Yakub Kadri, one of the pioneers of the Turkish novel. Haridi points out the resemblances between the heroines of the French, Egyptian and Turkish novelists. He considers the psychological dimensions of the characters, the gap between imagination and reality and the disastrous results of giving rein to caprice and impulse.

From the point of view of methodology, Mohamed Haridi – like Mohamed Yunis – seems to be indebted to the work of the late Mohamed Ghonemi Hilal (1916-1968), the doyen of comparatists in modern Arabic criticism. Included in this issue is a hitherto unpublished essay by this eminent scholar on "*Majnun Laila* in Arabic and in Persian Literature". The essay is prefaced by Farouk Shusha who adapted it from a radio programme (formerly broadcast by Cairo's "Second Programme": an Egyptian equivalent to London's "Radio Three"). It is a tribute to a dead master and an acknowledgement of his pioneering work. Ghonemi Hilal's essay is rather simplified and sketchy (For a further account of the subject, the reader is advised to consult his

The Emotional Life: Platonic Love and Mysticism). Still, it is a good illustation of the historical method which shows the metamorphoses of *Majnun Laila* and his journeys in Arabic, Persian and Turkish literature. Hilal maintains that this model of the madman-poet-lover has become a universal type; transcending oriental literature and becoming part of western literature as well.

Next we come to Samia Assad's "A Reading of Aragon's *Le Fou d'Elsa*". This is another manifestation of the *Majnun* (mad) type. The writer departs from the traditional concept of "influence" to concentrate on Aragon's'poetic work. She shows how it combines two synchronizing elements of the past, a basic awareness of the present, and a prophecy of a dream-future, like an Elsa who has not come into this world yet.

Section IV of this issue is an analysis of some oriental influences on European literature. The section opens with Hayam abu al-Hussein's *"The Arabian Nights* Entertainment in French Drama". The beginnings of the influence of this oriental work are traced back to the early nineteenth century; an era that witnessed a Romantic revolution and in which *The Arabian Nights* became symbolic of a legendary orient. The writer discusses some French plays inspired by *The Arabian Nights* with special reference to the story of *Schehrzade* whose appearance on the French stage was later to influence some Egyptian plays such as Aziz Abaza's verse play *Shahrayar*. These French borrowings, however, were usually presented in an atmosphere of glamour and spectacle. The picture presented was one of an exotic orient, reproduced to satisfy a taste for the marvellous and the exotic. The spectacle, however, did not exclude socio-political thematic elements that had nothing to do with the original *Arabian Nights*.

This image of a colourful orient was not confined to French drama: it was later to appear in some French novels. Abdel Monem Shehata writes on "The Image of Egypt: Fact and Fiction in the French Novel of the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century". The writer records changes in the reception of French novels about the orient. This he attributes to a recession of the Romantic wave and a satiety with oriental tales. The writer dwells, however, on French novels inspired by ancient or modern Egypt. His compass includes action, characterization and description.

With Lucien Portier – whose French is rendered here into Arabic by Ibtihal Yunis – we move from French literature to Italian literature, and from the first quarter of the twentieth century to the first quarter of the fourteenth century. Portier's subject is Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy* written betweeen 1302 and 1321. He traces its debt to Islamic sources: a theme that was first touched upon by M.Asin Palacios, author of *La escatologia musulmana en la Divina Comedia* (1919). This was followed by more recent doucments printed by the Italian E. Cerruli in his *Il libro della escala e la questione della fonti-Arabo-espagnole della Divina Comedia* (1949). Lucien Portier tends to play down the Islamic influence on *The Divine Comedy* in favour of western influences in general and of Virgil's *Aeneid* in particular. Portier admits, though, Dante's borrowings from Islamic thought and grants him an acquaintance with the book of *Al-Meraj* (or *La escala de Mohoma*). He asserts, however, that any possible influence must have been conditioned by Dante's environment and personal experience.

Next, we come to Makarim al Ghamri's "Oriental Influences on Russian Poetry" with special reference to the work of Mikhail Yurie-

vich Lermontov (1814-1841). The writer seeks to evaluate the Arab and Islamic influence on Lermontov, in the wider context of the interest – shown by many nineteenth century Russian writers – in the orient. Following a number of textual analyses of selected poems by Lermontov, Al-Ghamri concludes that the infatuation of this Russian writer with the Arab-Islamic east was not merely an infatuation with the exotic and the marvellous, as in the case of many another European writer. It was, rather, a product of more objective factors: for one thing, *Lermontov* – who always lived in conflict with his surroundings – found consolation in the spiritual values of Islam. This, however, did not preclude him from regarding the civilization of the East from a wide human perspective: in his work, two images of the Arab world are presented: an ancient civilization that was a centre of light and of religious guidance, and a modern backward orient that has fallen victim to colonialism.

Finally, there is Mohamed Ali al Kurdi's "East and West: Reality and Ideology". Here an analysis is made of distorted images of the other: whether he be Eastern or Western. Two groups of studies of Arabic-Islamic culture are quoted in illustration of the writer's thesis.

We next come to "The Literary Scene" section of our issue. This features an abstract of a doctoral dissertation on "The Influence of T.S. Eliot on W. H. Auden" submitted by Maher Shafik Farid to the University of Cairo in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Ph.D. degree in September 1982. There is also a report by Sabri Hafiz on The Symposium on the Arab-European Dialogue held in Hamburg between 11-16 April 1983.

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APPENDIX II

Abstract of *Fusul*, July 1983
ed. Izz El-Din Ismail
tr. Maher Shafiq Farid

The previous issue of *Fusul*, dealing like this one with Comparative Literature, has featured a fair number of theoretical essays and studies directed basically upon an examination of the concept of comparative literature, the subsidiary issues to which it has given rise, the legality of comparative literature in comparison with other branches of knowledge, and – finally – points of contact and difference between theoreticians and practitioners of the subject in the present century. Our choice of subject has called, in the first place, for a scrutiny of theoretical issues and an examination of the basic problems that are the starting point of its methods, tools and goals. A no less conspicuous goal, however, was the movement from theoretical thought to practical and applied study. Keen on application – in dealing with issues, trends and methods – this *Journal* has chosen to move in three directions: (a) comparisons dealing with literary works or ideas belonging to literatures other than Arabic; (b) comparisons dealing with Arab literary works that had some influence, direct or indirect, on other literatures; (c) comparisons dealing with Arab literary works and ideas in so far as they show traces of influence from non-Arabic literatures. Our previ-

ous issue has been taken up by studies of the first two categories; the present one is devoted to the third category.

Hence it will be noticed that the great majority of studies included in this issue move in the orbit of reciprocal influence. The Arabic text is used as a starting point for an examination of foreign sources, whether direct or indirect. We have chosen to say "the great majority", however, because a number of the studies included offer comparisons that have nothing to do with the concept of influence, as in the case of studies by Ali Shalash, Fadwa Malti-Douglas and, to some extent, Gharaa Hussein. The papers of these three consist in a critical analysis of texts and a reading of the Arabic literary text in the context of another. Besides, the present issue features, at its very beginning,two papers by Atteya Amer and Nabila Ibrahim of a special nature.

Atteya Amer's study, which heads this issue, is of a historical nature. Its importance in the present context derives partly from its revelation of the beginnings of comparative studies in the Arab world in the nineteenth century, as exemplified in the writings of Rifaa al-Tahtawi and Ali Mubarak. The writer then moves to the twentieth century recording the rise of consciousness of the idea of comparison as certain scholars, such as Ahmed Dayf, author of *An Introduction to the Study of Arabic Rhetoric*, fell under the influence of flourishing comparative studies in France. The interest in linguistic comparative studies has made itself manifest in university colleges and faculties as from the year 1924. In 1938 comparative literature became a subject of study in Dar al-Ulum. Apart, however, from university colleges and Dar al-Ulum, *al-Risala* published in 1935 a number of studies, comparing Arabic literature with its English counterpart, by Fakhry Abou

el-Soud. What is interesting about these studies is that they did not adopt the historical view of the French school, but concentrated instead on critical analysis of texts and on comparing the aesthetic values of the two literatures under consideration. Fakhry Abou el-Soud thus anticipated the rebellion of the "American School" against the "French School". The writer then refers to Egyptian missions abroad, to specialize in comparative literature, in France at first and then in England.

Nabila Ibrahim's study, which comes next, deals with "The Universality of Popular Expression". This deals with an anonymous branch of literary creativity, namely popular literature. The writer is able, nevertheless, to record certain points of contact between the forms of popular expression amongst different peoples at different times. Such a similarity calls for an explanation. Could it be due to the transmission of the literary material – orally in most cases – from one milieu to another? This is the question that folklorist studies, starting from the early nineteenth century, have had to grapple with. These studies have pointed out that the similarities are not confined to partial motifs or even to entire forms. The similarity extends sometimes to the very laws that govern specific structures. Successive studies, however, have not succeeded yet in pinning down the reasons behind these similarities.

The transmission of popular expression, in its different forms, is an undeniable fact. Equally undeniable are the distortions and transformations to which it is subject in response to the nature and specific demands of the collective mentality to which it has emigrated. To this extent the historical method can be justified in comparative studies of

similar or cognate texts in different environments and at different times. The identity of laws governing the structure of these forms, however, cannot be explained in terms of the concept of reciprocal influence. Hence comparative popular studies have left this concept behind in search of new reasons for such an identity. This has turned out to be possible only through the text and the system governing the relations of its component parts.

Nabila Ibrahim then deals with various endeavours to analyse popular texts from a universal perspective, starting from Axel Olrik and ending with later textual studies conducted by folklorists and literary critics alike.

We next come to eighteen applied studies covering some basic aspects of comparative literature in succession and interpenetrating amongst themselves. As we have said, with the exception of the papers of Ali Shalash, Fadwa Malti-Douglas and – to some extent – Gharaa Hussein (all of whom are steering clear of the concept of reciprocal influence), these studies deal with the influence of foreign literatures on modern Arabic literature. The historical pattern is observed. Thus we begin with Ahmed Etman's "Notes on the Greek Myth in the Poetry of al-Sayab" and Fakhri Kostandi's "Taha Hussein and the Art of the Epigram". These are followed by comparative studies of Arabic and French literature and thought, followed in turn by studies of some English influences on Arabic literature and of the impact of an American novel on some Arabic novels. Next we come across four studies dealing with the influence of German literature on modern Arabic writing. Finally, Ahmed Abdel-Aziz writes on the influence of the Spanish Lorca on contemporary Arabic poetry and drama.

The succession of these studies in this order is meant to suggest that modern Arabic literature, in all its forms, and modern Arabic thought have made use of various influences and tributaries of world literature. It is a matter of give-and-take.

On the other hand, these axes interpenetrate giving rise to new ones. The papers of Fadwa Malti-Douglas, Fakhry Kostandi and Abdel Rasheed Mahmoudi deal respectively with Taha Hussein's *Al-Ayam "Days"* (rendered into English as *An Egyptian Childhood, The Stream of Days* and *A Passage to France*) and his epigrammatic art as exemplified in *Janat al-Shawk (A Garden of Thorns)* and the Cartesian method of doubt, both in his critical and in his creative work. As for the influence of English literature on Arabic literature, Ibrahim Abdel Rahman and Mohamed Abdel Hai deal respectively with the influence of English romantic poetry on the *Diwan* school of poets and on the *Apollo* school of poetry. On the other hand, Mohamed Abdel Hai, Ramses Awad, Abdel Hamid Ibrahim and Angele Botros all deal with the question of translating English literature into Arabic. As far as literary genres are concerned, Ibrahim Abdel Rahman and Mohamed Abdel Hai deal with poetry, Ramses Awad and Abdel Hamid Ibrahim with drama, Angele Botros and Sabri Hafiz with the art of the novel, in relation to translated English and American novels. As for the impact of German literature on Arabic writing, Kamal Radwan, Mustpha Maher and Issam Bahiy write on the influence of the figure of Faust, and of Satan, on modern Arabic writing. Nahed al-Deeb, on the other hand, traces the influence of Brecht on the drama of Naguib Sorour. This is all meant to demonstrate that the order in which these studies are presented has a significance, and a function, on more than one level.

The great majority of these applied studies move implicitly, as we have seen, within the orbit of the concept of reciprocal influence. The limited number of textual studies featured by the present issue, however, conduct indirectly a methodical dialogue, in the domain of application, with the above-mentioned studies. It can be argued, broadly speaking that the structure of the present issue seeks – through application – to present the reader with a thesis (exemplified by most of the papers included), an antithesis (exemplified in a limited number of studies) and a synthesis (exemplified in Nabila Ibrahim's paper).

The first of our historical studies is Ahmed Etman's "Notes on the Greek Myth in the Poetry of al-Sayab". The writer traces the historical roots of the mythological phenomenon, drawing attention to the role played by the romantic school of poets in Egypt, and the symbolic school of poets in Lebanon, in introducing myth in poetry, as Western romantic poets and symbolists have done. The intersest in myth, however, was not confined to this: according to Etman, it has acquired momentum with the rise of new Arabic poetry, especially in the work of the pioneering Iraqi poet Badr Shakir al-Sayab. So extensive is the use of mythology in the poems of Al-Sayab that critics have differed on his success – or failure – in putting it to artistic uses. Etman maintains that al-Sayab has succeeded in employing myth – and the myth of Tamuz in particular – to enrich his poetry. Much of his work, however, has sunk under the load of the myth and is not justified by artistic necessity. In such cases, the myth is usually summed up in a few words and the reader is made cognizant of it only by a footnote at the bottom of the page. Etman traces al-Sayab's use of myth, starting from "A Shepherd's Song" and "Body and Soul" – early romantic poems of his – up to his last poems in which mythological echoes – Greek, Assyri-

an and Babylonian – combine with the pains of illness and political frustrations.

This study of the impact of Greek mythology on al-Sayab's poetry is followed by a study of a classical literary genre – namely that of the epigram – which Taha Hussein sought to introduce into modern Arabic literature. Fakhry Kostandi, author of this study, starts from the premise that Taha Hussein was convinced of the ability of Arabic to go beyond traditional artistic forms and was flexible enough to accommodate various literary forms of world literature. Hence his experimentation with the epigrammatic form in *Janat al-Shawk* (A Garden of Thorns). Kostandi's study of the epigrams included in this work is meant to establish and consolidate the theory of transmission of one literary genre from one literature to another and from one age to another.

Kostandi's opens a group of studies of the work of Taha Hussein. It is immediately followed by Abdel Rasheed Mahmoudi's "Taha Hussein and Descartes". This is a historical research into the impact of Descartes' thought on Taha Hussein in the domains of literary study and of creative work alike, with special reference to *The Days*. Mahmoudi's paper is both negatory and affirmative: on the one hand, he seeks to refute the common view that Taha Hussein's *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* shows the influence of Descartes' method. On the other hand, he seeks to illuminate what no one has demonstrated before, namely that *The Days*, Taha Hussein's autobiography, is Cartesian in method. The doubts cast by Taha Hussein on Pre-Islamic poetry were negative and self-defeating: they ended in negating their very subject. Descartes' method, on the other hand, is based on a logical chain of rea-

soning starting in doubt but ending in certainty. The most that can be said in this respect is that in his literary studies, Taha Hussein has adopted a rationalistic view not dissimilar to Descartes' in the domain of philosophy. As for *The Days*, Mahmoudi maintains that it is based on a Cartesian *Cogito, ergo sum.* Unlike Descartes, however, this is not a link in a chain of reasoning, but a vivid personal experience. Like Descartes, Taha Hussein starts with a feeling of solitude and tries to overcome it doubting, like the French philosopher, the knowledge acquired through the sense; a doubt that is characteristic of Descartes' *Méditations*. Both the French philosopher and the Egyptian man-of-letters agree in having recourse to an external power (The Other in the case of Taha Hussein and God in the case of Descartes) to rescue the isolated self and mediate between it and the external world.

Another aspect of the French impact on Arabic literature is touched upon by Laila Enan's "French Romanticism: Original and Translation in al-Manfalouti's Fiction". Two trends are distinguished by the writer as far as the translation of French romantic fiction into Arabic is concerned: on the one hand, there were unabridged and semi-complete versions . On the other, translators took liberties with their texts to an extensive degree. An example of these free translations is *Attala* which was translated by al-Manfalouti as *The Martyrs*. Another is his neglect, in translating *Paul et Virginie*, of descriptions of nature and social traditions and intoducing into this work – as well as into *For the Sake of the Crown* – some alterations aimed at highlighting the translator's nationalist sentiments. This may be justified by al-Manfalouti's desire to make the French text akin to the intrests of his Arab reader, but Enan also records some alterations that cannot be justified on grounds of history, subject-matter or art. In such cases the original is

merely made to fit in with al-Manfalouti's own vision and to reflect his personal biases. This strips the originals of their philosophical content and merely turns them into love stories.

The writer concludes that al-Manfalouti has attempted a mélange of European eighteenth century thought and nineteenth century sentiment, thus reflecting the dilemma of writer and reader alike as they find themselves torn between inherited values of Arab culture, on the one hand, and the pull of Western culture on the other, at a time when the Arab world was just throwing off the yoke of the Ottoman empire.

Although Gharaa Hussein's "The Tale and Reality" is a comparison of Egyptian and French folkloric tales, we would rather leave it aside for the moment, to be touched upon later togather with other textual studies by Ali Shalash and Fadwa Malti-Douglas.

We next come to studies of the influence of English literature on modern Arabic writing. First, there is Ibrahim Abdel Rahman's "The Critical Heritage of the Diwan School: Origins and Sources". The title is indicative of the writer's historical method. He dwells on the Diwan poets' – especially al-Akad's – campaign against the poetry of Shawqi. This is seen to be based on two premises: (1) a new concept of poetry, its functions and tools, drawing on western literature, both critical and creative, especially in its classical phase (2) the creation of poetical works modelled on those of the English romàntic poets. In seeking to achieve these goals, they sought to point out the backward and traditional character of Shawqi's poetry. The writer reviews a number of texts in which al-Akad, the most important theoretician of the Diwan school, tried to put forward this new concept of poetry at length. From this review Abdel Rahman concludes that these writings

do not constitute an integrated theory of poetry: they are little more than ideas and opinions inspired by various readings in literature and criticism. These ideas are traced back to their ancient and modern sources, both Western and Arabic. The ancient western sources are represented by Greek and Roman criticism and by classical criticism in general. The classical Arabic sources are scattered over a wide range of Arabic writings, both creative and critical. As for the modern sources of al-Diwan's critical thinking, they are to be found partly in some contemporary Arab writers – who had access to French culture – and partly in the heritage of the romantic school, both critical and . poetic, in the English language particularly. This is revealed through a comparison of creative and critical texts by Diwan poets with texts from English romantic poets and critics.

Another study of the impact of English literature on modern Arabic writing is Mohamed Abdel Hai's "The Violet and the Crucible: Translation and the Language of Arabic Romantic Poetry". This is a study of the impact of Arabic translations of specimens of English poetry on the rise of Arabic romantic poetry, both in form and in subject-matter. Abdel Hai ranges from the first Arabic translation of the hymn "The Cross of Christ" (1830) to the Arabic version of the second *Hymns for Worship* (1852) usually credited to Botros al-Bustani, the Arabic version of the Bible supervised by the Protestant Church translation of psalms and hymns between 1847 and 1995 and – finally – translations of Shakespeare, Shelley, Wordsworth, Keats, Burns, etc...

Abdel Hai's paper points out the extent of the influence exercised by Arabic versions of hymns on Syrian and Lebanese poets, especially in the United States of America, having read and sung them at mis-

sionary schools. He also points out the significance of their poetry for the younger men of the Apollo school. As for the Diwan poets, Abdel-Hai maintains that they were not born romantics, like their Arab counterparts in their American exile. Hence their poetry was not a complete break with neo-classical canons of taste. It rather struck a balance between experimentation and innovation. This was a reflection of the tensions of the romantic-neoclassical duality in their poetical sensibility. The Diwan poets paved the way for the Apollo poets to adopt the romantic conception of poetry as based on symbol and suggestion rather than direct statement. This was to combine with a gradual assimilation of the styles of English – and French – romantic poetry.

Since he is mainly concerned with tracing the influence of translated English works on Arabic writing, Abdel Hai shows how Arab romantic poets assimilated English romantic poetry in translation. He does not neglect to mention, however, the role played by Arab *Sufi* (mystical) poetry in enriching Arabic romantic poetry and endowing it with certain characteristics that are not to be found in its English counterpart. Abdel Hai also studies the influence of the romantic concept of poetry on re-structuring the Arabic poem, freeing its metre and music from rigid patterns, both in the light of some critical writings and through direct translations of English poems.

Also treating of the impact of English writing on modern Arabic literature, and stressing the role of translation in this respect, are two further studies taking us from the domains of criticism and poetry to that of drama. Ramses Awad writes on "*Romeo and Juliet* on the Egyptian stage" and Abdel Hamid Ibrahim on "A Murder: Eliot and Abdel Sabour".

The first of these two papers records the popularity of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet* and *Othello* on the Egyptian stage in the first three decades of the present century. As for *Romeo and Juliet*, it had by 1900 appeared in two Arabic versions, by Naguib Ḥadad and Nicola Rizk Allah respectively. *Romeo and Juliet* was probably the most popular of all Shakespeare's plays on the Egyptian stage. First it was presented by the troupe of Abu Khalil al-Kabani in 1900 as *Martyrs of Love* . In the same year, the troupe of Iskander Farah put it on stage; the role of Romeo being played by Sheikh Salama Higazy before he left Farah's troupe to form one of his own. Higazy introduced the element of song to such an extent that *Romeo and Juliet* was stripped of its tragic content and nothing but the sentimental interest was retained. Awad reviews how it was presented on stage complete, or only in part, with the alterations and transformations this entailed.

Abdel Hamid Ibrahim, on the other hand, makes a comparison between T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* and Salah Abdel Sabour's play, though his translation was published only posthumously in 1982. The writer records some similarities between the two plays mentioning, at the same time. differences that earlier critics have noted.

While Laila Enan, as we have seen, has dealt with the translation of romantic fiction into Arabic, Angele Botros Samaan deals with "Specimens of the English Novel in Arabic Translation". She treats of translations published between 1940 and 1973, pointing out the arbitrariness of choice of material for translation, the absence of planning and the complete subjection to the personal tastes of the translators on the one hand and to the demands of the market on the other. For some reason, the novels of Charles Dickens proved to be the most popular with

Egyptian and Arab translators. *A Tale of Two Cities* alone, was translated into Arabic no less than nine times. Together with Dickens, there have appeared translations of Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Charlotte Bronte, Jane Austen, Samuel Johnson, H. G. Wells and others. Some of these translations, however, were abridgements; others were made to fit popular and cheap editions.

Next we come to Sabri Hafiz's study of the impact of Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* on the Arabic novel. The writer defines the basic goal of comparative studies as a sharpening of the reader's awareness of the characteristics of a given literary work through the use of other works capable of its illumination. This is as it were an affirmation of the critical method of comparative studies: a literary text is to be studied in the context of another. That is probably why Hafiz uses the phrase "Parallel Experiences" as a sub-title to his study. He reviews various critical interpretations of *The Sound and the Fury* which goes to show how rich it is. This he uses as a preface to an examination of its impact on four modern Arabic novels. For reasons of space, mention will be made here of two only of these novels: Ghassan Kanafani's *Ma Tabaqa Lakum* (what Remains for You) and Naguib Mahfouz's *Miramar*.

Hafiz provides evidence that three Arab novelists have been influenced by Faulkner's novel in its Arabic version. As for Kanafani's debt, Hafiz asserts that it goes beyond action and characterization to include symbolism, imagery, metaphorization and artistic structure based on the stream of consciousess technique and the interaction of place and time, as well as the method of narration. Naguib Mahfouz, on the other hand, has been able – thanks to his mastery of the novel

form and his ability to digest and assimilate – to conceal his debt to *The Sound and The Fury*. Through an analysis of *Miramar*, however, Hafiz reveals similarities of action and character between the two works that cannot be coincidental. We may say, therefore, that the applied aspect of Hafiz's paper is devoted to the theory of reciprocal influence.

Thus end our group of studies of the impact of translated English (and American) works on modern Arabic criticism, poetry, drama and fiction. We next come to studies of the German impact. For some reason, three of the studies included here deal with the age-old problem of Faust: Kamal Radwan writes on "The idea of Faustus since the Age of Goethe", Mustapha Maher on "Faustus in Contemporary Arabic Literature" and Issam Bahiy on "Satan in Three Plays". Kamal Radwan traces the theme of Faust in Europe since the Age of Enlightenment as an expression of man's thirst for knowledge and freedom. He touches upon Lessing's – the pioneer of Enlightenment – treatment of the theme; then Goethe's where an alliance between Faust and Mephisto is effected in order to achieve unlimited knowledge. The writer traces works – poetic, dramatic and operatic – by contemporaries of Goethe and moves on to Faustus' manifestations in twentieth century Germany as exemplified in Thomas Mann's play *Doctor Faustus* (1947). From the European Faust Radwan takes us to Egypt where the theme of Faust became popular, Goethe's play was translated into Arabic and discussed by many a writer. Suffice it to say that the theme was treated by at least five Egyptian dramatists, namely Tawfik al-Hakim, Ali Ahmed Bakatheer, Mohamed Farid Abu Hadid, Mahmoud Taymour and Fathi Radwan.

From Kamal Radwan we move on to Mustapha Maher who is mainly concerned with the impact of Goethe in general, and of his *Faust* in particular, on modern Arabic literature. This impact is studied under five headings (i) a tendency towards translation or Arabicization as in Ahmed Hassan al-Zayat's version of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (ii) an acquisitive tendency that likes to think that Goethe's thought is akin, in essence, to Islamic culture. Among the exponents of this view are the Egyptian Abdel Rahman Sidqi and the Algerian Abdel Hamid ben Shabou (iii) an academic and scholarly tendency seeking to understand the works of Goethe in their own terms. A conspicuous example is Abdel Ghafar Makawi's "Wait a little, how beautiful thou art!" (iv) a tendency towards conducting a dialogue with Goethe as in Tawfik al-Hakim's *Ahd al Shaytan* (The Covenant of Satan) (v) a transformatory tendency in which the original is transformed by the translator into something different, such as turning the tragedy of *Faust* into a popular and cheap novel.

It is in the light of these divisions that Mustapha Maher studies al-Hakim's *The Covenant of Satan* as a dialogue with Coethe and Mohamed Farid Abu Hadid's a *Slave to Satan* as nearer to translation or Arabicization. Finally, he studies Ali Ahmed Bakatheer's *Faust al Jadid* (The New Faust) which is neither a dialogue with Goethe nor an Arabicization. It rather retains the original elements of the story, though Faust eventually triumphs over Satan and is absolved of his sins.

Issam Bahiy is also near to the Faust domain. He chooses to deal with the figure of Satan in three different plays: *ASlave to Satan, The New Faust* and *Towards a Better Life.* The field of research is more or

less the same as Radwan's and Maher's whether the focus be on Faust or on Satan. The duality of Faust-Satan is indissoluble.

Bahiy starts by reviewing mankind's conception, through the ages, of Satan as a symbol of evil, disobedience and rebellion, and as an enemy to man. He reviews the image of Satan in Goethe's *Faust* and in Marlowe's *The Tragical History of Dr Faustus*, connecting both images with the image of Satan in collective memory. Analysing the three modern Arabic plays he has chosen, Bahiy reveals the transformations and additions introduced by their authors – both in thought and in art – to express a personal vision of the sufferings of Arab society in particular and of humanity in general.

It is interesting to note that all the Faustian echoes, touched upon in the three studies mentioned above, have been in the field of drama. In pursuance of the impact of German drama on its Arabic counterpart, Nahed al-Deeb contributes a study of "The Drama of Naguib Sorour and the Assimilation of German Drama". According to the writer, the importance of Sorour's work lies in taking Egyptian drama a step further from critical realism to an interest in something transcending realism of character and action. This is due to the impact exercised upon Sorour, as a student of dramatic direction in Eastern Euope, by Brecht's theoretical writings and dramatic works. The writer analyses a number of Sorour's plays in the light of the *donnés* of epic theatre – both intellectually and artistically – concluding that the chief merit of these plays consists in effecting a synthesis of the characteristics of epic drama, the popular Egyptian tradition, social issues and nationalist aspirations. Through this synthesis, Sorour has managed to create a dramatic text that does not take heed of Aristotelian dramatic structure

but resorts to all methods of breaking the circle of dramatic illusion and putting an end to the alienation of the audience from the stage.

Following these studies of the influence of German literature on modern Arabic writing, Ahmed Abdel Aziz writes on the influence of the Spanish Lorca on Arab writers and poets. With all qualifications as regards how Arab writers came to know Lorca through other mediators, Abdel Aziz safely concludes that he influenced contemporary Arab poets. Sometimes this influence takes the form of using lines from Lorca as an epigraph: at other times it takes the form of quoting him, of adapting some of his imagery and the characteristic properties of his poetic world: a bloody wedding, dawn, the moon, gypsy songs, daggers, horses, knights, Grenada. The writer then examines a number of Lorca's phrases that have found their way into Arabic poetry: cut breasts, a broken wing, the weeping of the lyr,e lonely and remote Cordova, the black guard, the chimes of five o'clock, etc. He dwells on the artistic structure of Lorca's poems and its influence on the structure of Arabic poetry. Finally he compares Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (*The House of Bernarda Alba*) with Salah Abdel Sabour's *The Princess Waits*.

All the above-mentioned studies move - as we have seen - within the framework of reciprocal influence stressing at the same time the openness of modern Arabic literature to world literature, and the use it has made of it.

It remains to say a few words about three studies of which brief mention has been made before. They are all opposed to the theory of reciprocal influence: similar texts are treated in this context for a pure-

ly critical purpose, namely to reveal the artistic and intellectual dimensions of separate texts and to illuminate their various aspects.

First of these three studies is Ali Shalash's "New York in Six Poems". Three of the poems under consideration are by Arab poets belonging to three different Arab countries: Adonis, Abdel Wahab al-Bayati and Mohamed Ibrahim Abu Sinnah. The rest are by the Russian Mayakovsky, the Spanish Lorca and the Senegalese Senghor. They all visited New York and each wrote a poem on it. The study shows how the vision of each was conditioned by his cultural background and ideological stand and how these differences were reflected in the various components of their poems. It is interesting, however, that the three Arab poets have this much in common: they all reject New York and satirize it against a backcloth of Arab culture.

Next we come to Fadwa Malti-Douglas' "Blindness in the Mirror of Autobiography", a comparison between two autobiographies, one by the Egyptian Taha Hussein and the other by the Indian Ved Mehta. Both writers belong to our so-called third world; they are both blind men attempting their hands at the same literary genre. Apart from this there is no chance of their ever having met each other or of any possible influence: Hence the writer studies blindness as a textual fact, depicting the parallels between both writers and pointing out the similarities as well as the differences. She then manages to pin down the characterisitics of the writing of the blind as exemplified in the texts under discussion and the differences, all the same, between her two writers. Fadwa Malti-Douglas dwells on the phenomenon of the pain associated with blindness and how each writer reacted to it differently. Together with the duality of blindness and pain, there is the duality of

tradition and innovation, the association of blindness with tradition, and the duality of East and West. All these dualities play parallel roles in the work of both writers, converging sometimes and diverging at others, but helping to highlight the qualities peculiar to each.

The third and last study is Gharaa Hussein Mehana's "The Tale and Reality". It is a depiction of observable parallels between a set of Arabic and French folkloric tales. These parallelisms are not indicative of a reciprocal influence; rather they indicate points of contact and differences between the formulae chosen by different peoples to express their actual concerns and dreams of the future. This is achieved through an analysis of ten Arabic folkloric tales and their French counterparts.

Finally, it remains to add that the scope of applied studies, employing both methods indicated here, has still room for further fruitful contributions.

Translated by

Maher Shafik Farid.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF MODERN EGYPTIAN LITERATURE IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Lengthy as it is, the present bibliography lays no claim to comprehensiveness. It is an annotated, but select, bibliography of modern Arabic literature in English translation from the early decades of the present century to December 1994.

All the items cited were originally written in Arabic except for a few writers who wrote in English but who seemed to me, for some reason or other, part of the panorama of modern Egyptian literature (e.g.Waguih Ghali, Ahdaf Soueif, Yussreya Abou Hadid).

Some of my chosen authors are not men of letters in the strict sense of the word. There are social reformers (Qassim Amin, Khalid Mohamed Khalid), theologians (Mohamed Abdou), jurists (Abd Al-Razzaq al-Sanhuri), philosophers (Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayyed), feminists (Hoda Shaarawi, Doria Shafik), travellers (Muhammed Thabet) and actors (Naguib al-Rihani). But they were all instrumental in shaping the cultural life of the nation.

Again a few of my authors were not Egyptian by birth (e.g. Ismail Adham, Ali Ahmed Bakathir) but they were included on the strength of the fact that they spent much of their working life in Egypt and were, regardless of the question of nationality, an integral part of the Egyptian literary scene.

Of the authors included, the lion's share -- as I hardly need to say -- is Naguib Mahfouz's, but then the preponderance of the Nobel prize

laureate for 1988 needs no apology on my part. Other writers who figure prominently on the list of English translation are Tawfiq al-Hakim, Yahya Haqqi, Youssef Idris, Youssef El-Sebai and Nawal al-Saadawi.

Incidentally, I have availed myself of the present occasion to vastly expand the Naguib Mahfouz bibliography I contributed, a couple of years ago, to M.M. Enani's *Naguib Mahfouz: Egyptian Perspectives* (The General Egyptian Book Organization, Cairo 1989).

The reader may justly complain that no standard English spelling of my authors' names has been adopted throughout (e.g. Naguib/ Najib Mahfouz). I can only plead that as a bibliographer I had to faithfully adhere to the extant English versions of Arabic names which could be transliterated in more than one way. Names of individual authors are listed in their alphabetical order in Arabic starting with first – rather than family – name.

In order to avoid repetition, I have not (except in the case of Naguib Mahfouz) listed under 'Individual Authors' works cited in other sections of the Bibliography. For the reader to consult, say, Youssef El-Sharouni, it is not enough to look him up under 'Individual Authors'. One should also refer to other sections: 'Bibliographies', 'General Studies', 'Short Story Anthologies', 'Fiction Studies', etc.. I apologize for the inconvenience this may cause, but then I had to draw the line somewhere.

The serious student who requires a fuller coverage of the field is advised to consult the back numbers of *Prism, Cairo Today,*

Al-Ahram Weekly, The Egyptian Gazette and *The Egyptian Mail*, to say nothing of the defunct *Arab Observer, Arab Review* and other publications of the not so remote past.

The present bibliography should be supplemented by reference to two important works, Angele Botros Samaan's *Arabic Literature in Egypt in English Translation: A Bibliography* (1991) and Issa J. Boullata's 'Selected Bibliography in English on Modern Arabic Literature 1945-1980' at the end of his *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature* (1980). I have consulted these works but no attempt was made on my part to incorporate their contents in the present work. It is, for better or worse, entirely the compiler's own work. I have been working on this bibliography, on and off, for a number of years, mainly in my study at Dokki but also on my visits to the libraries of a number of British universities: London, Keele, Glasgow, Leeds, Oxford, Cambridge and Warwick.

The bibliography is divided into the following sections:

I ***Bibliographies***

II. ***Translation***: Theory and Practice

III ***General Studies***

IV ***Poetry***:

Anthologies

Studies

V ***Fiction***:

Novel Anthologies

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VI ***Drama*** :

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VII ***The Essay:***

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VIII ***Individual Authors***

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IV Poetry

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V. FICTION

See also Under 'Individual Authors'

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